

Phil Magee - A Personal Tribute

I first met Phil at the initial QSAR Gordon Conference at Franklin Pierce College in Ringe, NH. At that time he was an established research chemist (Senior Scientist?) at Ortho, and I was a fresh associate professor who was trying to learn QSAR. (Doug Henry was my first Ph.D. student and my QSAR teacher.) My first stumbling words to Phil were that I used Ortho's Isotox, and he replied that I should use Orthene. At that time, I didn't realize that he was the developer of a very successful product and one of the first pesticides that became lethal because of the insect's metabolism.

We became better acquainted as we would see each other at subsequent Gordon Conferences. I remember Phil giving a paper regarding a database he had developed that contained physico-chemical values useful for developing QSAR equations. Phil retired from Ortho, started his own consulting business (BIOSAR Research) and became a member of the Department of Dermatology at the University of California-San Francisco. I was so pleased when he indicated that he would like to give lectures at Oregon State University's College of Pharmacy. His first trip was spring 1987 and I had ended up in the hospital with a messy appendicitis just prior to his arriving in Corvallis. Phil continued to come yearly with Doug Henry, who now was at MDL, joining him. At one of the Gordon Conferences I remember Phil trying to convince Marvin Charton that he should get out of Brooklyn and come to Corvallis to give a seminar. Another time Phil stood in the Valley Library Quad as golden yellow leaves were falling from the trees and remarked how much he missed the seasons.

Phil, Doug and I called ourselves Research Triangle West. We did coordinate a symposium at the Los Angeles American Chemical Society Meeting for the Division of Agrochemicals that resulted in a book that we three co-edited. I was elated to find it in the Boston Public Library.

Several years later Phil had his stroke. Many may not realize that he had to relearn to read. Through it all, Phil kept his sense of humor. He once told me that he didn't have to buy any more books because every volume on his bookshelf was new to him. Phil gave presentations to our students in our professional program on what it is like to have a stroke and having to relearn how to do basic activities including relearning the alphabet. My introduction to the students consisted of a brief review of Phil's publications, books edited, patents and commercial products on the market. Phil made a great impression on the students. Several came up after his presentations to thank him. It was gratifying to watch Phil, after his stroke, interact with a member of our faculty, One of our faculty has a progressing neuronal degenerative disease. The two both encouraged each other and did it in a positive, humorous way.

The final time my wife and I saw Phil was a year ago when I visited Doug Henry to discuss our joint project. We stopped at Phil's home on our way home by way of the Napa Valley and the Redwoods. Phil was so proud to show us his home and all of the landscaping. He would point out where he and Doug would sit on Sunday afternoons to discuss science. It was a memorable afternoon.

Phil was a devoted husband, parent and grandparent. He and his wife, Zee, provided scholarships for young women in the Philippines to attend college. The QSAR community lost one of its pioneer scientists. I lost a valued colleague.

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