



BIOLOGY CURRENTS

FEIGELSON AWARD

Muriel and Philip Feigelson (Biology '46, '47) have spent a lifetime of high distinction in academics; their careers have been associated with eight institutions of higher learning. Yet the place that has remained closest to their hearts is Queens College, where they met as undergraduates and where, in Muriel's words, the great horizons of literature, art, and science first opened wide. They have honored their *alma mater* by endowing an annual \$1000 award for excellence in undergraduate research and scholarship. For this extraordinary gesture, realized on professors' salaries, the Department is deeply grateful.

Muriel's path to a science career was not an orthodox one, perhaps because when she graduated from Queens in 1946, a woman with a BS degree was considered educated enough. She married her QC sweetheart Philip and followed him through his Ph.D. and then his assistant professorship. She worked as a lab technician, but her employers at the Universities of Syracuse and Wisconsin recognized her talent and gave her considerable independence. During this period, she appeared as co-author on five papers.

When Philip won an appointment at Columbia, Muriel enrolled in the Ph.D. program at NYU and made a full commitment to a research career. She completed her Ph.D. while raising two children, then embarked on a full-spirited adventure in science.

Her research has focused on developmental and reproductive biology: the study of postnatal developmental enzymes, and the proteins of the reproductive tract. With Philip, she was the first to show that the steroid hormones act by stimulating (m)RNA and protein synthesis (BBA 32: 430-435, 1959). Her studies have resulted in 47 journal articles, one book of scientific travel ("Wandering Through Paradox," Four Winds Press, 1996), one patent, an associate editorship at the Journal of Steroid Chemistry, and election as Fellow of the AAAS.

Muriel retired in 1988, but her creative spirit has not allowed her to rest. She has become a novelist, having

completed two novels which will be incorporated into a tetralogy concerning people who break out of geographic, ethnic, and social boundaries.

Philip Feigelson, who grew up in Corona, observes that none of his childhood friends became scientists. He remembers at age 8 or 10 lying in the grass watching aphids, and also using a simple microscope to watch protozoa in a drop of swamp water he collected.

Another passion was reading. At about age 12, he resolved to read all the fiction books in the Corona public library, from A to Z. He in fact completed two complete library rows, but found he had only advanced from A- to AL-. Later young Philip read more selectively, emphasizing biographies and travel books to exotic lands.

When Philip came to Queens from Newtown

High School, he found everything an eye-opener, especially the embryology and physiology courses. Among his teachers, he found role models in Alfred F. Huettner and a young, inspiring teacher on the cutting edge of science, Ethel Glancy D'Angelo. One great disappointment was that in the mid-1940s, none of the Biology faculty were doing active research (Huettner was writing a textbook; Arthur Colwin was on duty in the war), hence no opportunity existed for student research. Philip remembers that, after learning about muscle action potentials in Dr. D'Angelo's course, he proposed a project to her: using the techniques of electrophysiology to measure muscle potentials in the larynx evoked during speech. One could then conceivably apply the information to enhance speech therapy in mutes. Alas, Phil would have to go elsewhere to do his own research.

After a master's degree at Syracuse University, where he cultured avian *Plasmodia in vitro*, he earned a Ph.D. in biochemistry at the University of Wisconsin. After two years at the Fels Research Institute at Antioch College, Phil joined the Institute of Cancer Research and the Biochemistry Department at Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons. He retired from Columbia in 1998 after 44 years of research and teaching as Professor



Muriel and Philip Feigelson

of Biochemistry, with the last 10 years as Associate Dean for Graduate Affairs and Assistant Vice President of the University.

A lifelong theme of Philip's research has been regulatory enzymology, particularly hormone-mediated enzyme induction. He was among the first to study the glucocorticoid receptor and hormonal control of tissue-specific gene expression. Though trained in classical biochemistry, Philip saw the rise of molecular biology. He fully participated in these developments, and continued to publish in the most prestigious journals in his field. His lifetime total includes 191 published papers. Philip also served on the editorial boards of five journals, including the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*. He has also served as President of the New York Academy of Sciences, and was elected Fellow of the AAAS and the World Academy of Arts and Sciences, among other honors. Philip and Muriel's two children are following in the intellectual footsteps of their parents.

Philip's advice to young biologists? This is a wonderful time to be a research scientist—biological insights are increasing exponentially. Aim high, because most people achieve what they strive for. If one has not had a good life, it is often because one has not aspired to a worthy goal.

NOBLE WINS GOLDWATER SCHOLARSHIP

Christine Noble was hiking up a mountain trail in Guyana. She had come 80 miles up-river in a small boat, and was now entering the beautiful countryside. The leader of the group stopped and pointed to a clump of trees on one side. "This is where the bush-master killed a student last week," he said.



Christine Noble

Christine calculated that at this point the journey back would be about the same length as continuing on to the end, and if she turned back, she would be traveling alone. She continued her trip.

This experience took place almost 10 years ago, when Christine was spending a required year in national service in her native Guyana. In the years since, Christine has continued traveling on paths few have taken before. She spent a scholarship year at the University of Kharkov, in the former USSR. That experience made her yearn for the West. She is now a biology major at Queens College, where she has accumulated a perfect 4.0 grade-point average. Last April she won a Goldwater Scholarship, a national competition with the most rigorous standards. This year she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and has been collecting medical school acceptances from every school she has applied to (NYU, Columbia, Cornell, U. Conn., Robert Wood Johnson). What brought her to these accomplishments?

For Christine, study is a family tradition. When she entered first grade at age 4, she knew the teacher—it was her mother. In a country that honors its teachers, a daughter of two teachers had no option but to study hard. Christine continues to study hard, but today the person watching over her shoulder is herself. She describes her technique: "I never read a chapter only once. But as soon as the light goes out—as soon as I realize something has not registered, I go back and do it again."

Christine will graduate this June. In medical school she hopes to do research on viruses, especially exotic ones like Ebola and other emerging pathogens. She imagines a life divided between the laboratory and the field, traveling in a countryside where danger and beauty coexist.

RETIRES

Sheldon Aaronson. Corky's brisk steps still resound in Biology Department corridors as he continues library research in ethnopharmacology. He is serving as president of the Friends of the Library, and was recently elected to the board of the Committee of Concerned Scientists, Inc., an organization that defends scientists and other academics wrongfully accused, imprisoned, or otherwise mistreated. He has also been listed in the *Annuaire International des Chercheurs en*

Medecine Antique, a publication of l'Universite Jean Monnet.

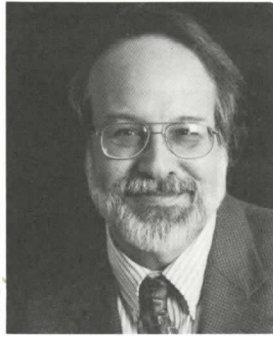
Arthur Colwin sent a holiday card from his home in Florida. He writes that in February '98 he underwent open-heart surgery to replace a failing mitral valve. The artificial replacement valve was a success. Through spring and summer he underwent gradual but clear-cut recovery and is now able to walk and drive. He and Laura hope to be back in Woods Hole this summer.

Andrew Greller remains busy with writing and botanical research. He served as external judge of honors for graduating majors at the University of Peradenya, Sri Lanka. He has also been appointed honorary Research Associate at the Institute of Systematic Botany at the NY Botanical Gardens, as well as at the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens.

Max Hecht continues as co-editor of *Evolutionary Biology*, a position he has held for 31 years. He has just completed work on volume 32.

Robert Prezant, Professor

PHOTO: DANIEL REILLY



Robert Prezant

Bob Prezant joined Queens College on January 1 as Dean of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, with a concomitant appointment as Professor of Biology. Though he will be on administrative leave from the latter position, he has no intention of taking professional leave from his research. He came to

Queens with a laboratory, which is in the process of being established in Razran (NSF) Hall, and which he intends to visit every day.

Bob is a malacologist—in fact the President of the American Malacological Society, and past Editor-in-Chief of the *American Malacological Bulletin*, a scholarly journal. He has published on such topics as bivalve dispersal through flotation; distribution of the bivalve *Lissarca notocardensis* on echinoid spines; changes in the periortracum of the Asian clam *Corbicula fluminea* in response to water pollution; form, function, and phylogeny of bivalve mucins, and some 30 additional papers.

Bob came to Queens from a previous position as Chair of Biology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. But his ties to Queens are not purely job-related. He was born in Brooklyn, attended Martin Van Buren High School in Queens, and says he basically grew up in Alley Park, where he spent many childhood hours relocating every frog and grasshopper from the park to his childhood home in Bayside.

One of Bob's special sites of interest was "P" Pond near the southern edge of Alley Park, where he set out to capture all the spring peepers for relocation to Bayside. Unknown to him, Robert Calhoon from the Biology Department was studying biological variation in "P" Pond spring peepers at the same time. Bob Calhoon announced with great puzzlement in the 1970s that all spring peepers had disappeared from the pond. A pollution source was suspected; only now has the cause been unearthed! Unfortunately for this version of events, Bob Prezant explained that he was collecting in "P" Pond in the 1960s, a decade before Bob Calhoon. His comment: "As is so often said when dealing with vanishing herps, IT'S NOT MY FAULT!" Meanwhile, peepers from the nearby park have long since repopulated "P."

Bob's wife Fran attended Queens College, and now teaches special education courses at the college level. Their daughter Jennifer is an early-education major at California University of Pennsylvania; son Jason is entering ninth grade and plays piano, sax, and clarinet. In this,

Jason is expressing one of his father's interests—the piano. Welcome back to Queens, Bob!

PoKay Ma, Assistant Professor

PoKay Ma

PoKay Ma joined the Department last September 1 as Assistant Professor. With a background in neurobiology, he immediately plunged into the teaching of comparative anatomy, a course he had assisted in at Washington University of St.

Louis. He finds Queens College students well prepared and eager to learn, and looks forward to more teaching in the years ahead.

PoKay's academic history includes a B.Sc. from the University of Oregon (Biology); a Ph.D. from Washington University (Neuroscience); a postdoc at Harvard (Neurobiology); and Senior Research Scientist at the Marine Science Center, Northeastern University.

His research focus is the neural control of behavior. In the past, PoKay has done the classical work on neural control of the whiskers of rodents (showing the neurons are arranged in structures called "barrelettes"), neurohumoral control of movement and posture in decapod crustaceans, and control of the fighting behavior of Siamese fighting fish (a study supported by the National Institutes of Mental Health). His current research involves the structure and development of the *locus coeruleus* in zebrafish. The *locus coeruleus* is a small noradrenergic center which may offer insights into the role of genetics and environment in nerve cell development.

PoKay's approach to his work is broadly based. He pays his complex subject the respect of a complex understanding. His hero is the great English neurophysiologist C.S. Sherrington, who saw the nervous system as a great integrator of complex phenomena, and did not shrink from following these phenomena to their ultimate ramifications.

PoKay is also interested in the biology and biodiversity of fishes, and traveled to Queens College with a series of aquaria. He is a good tennis player, and a frequenter of old-book stores.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

What is the most frequently offered advanced course in the Biology Department? It isn't Principles of Genetics or Principles of Cell Biology. Though these courses are offered every semester, they have been in existence for less than 10 years. Honors for multiplicity go to Biology 381/382, the biology seminar program, which has been offered every semester without interruption since 1973.

The one-hour seminar meets once a week to listen to a biologist from the Department, or a speaker from as far as Boston, New Haven, Princeton, St. Louis, Baltimore, or Durham, NC. The audience numbers from 30 to 50, and includes faculty, graduate students, and advanced undergraduates.

A seminar contains elements of the ideal learning experience. The speaker is a practicing scientist, presenting results of his or her most recent experiments and insights. The science presented is living science, caught in the process of birth. For its part, the audience is the ideal audience, following closely the speaker's ideas, enlarging, testing, and sharpening them with questions and comments.

The seminar experience is a shorthand for the scientific process itself. Science is a social activity, involving an interaction between the scientist and his or her peer group. In a formal way, this transaction is accomplished by the act of publication: the author posits his own work in the field, solicits peer review, and of-

fers the work for public confirmation and development.

The seminar is a kind of soft publication: the audience is smaller, the data may be incomplete, but the give and take between speaker and audience is a wonderful introduction to the creative processes of science. For participating faculty and graduate students, the seminar is equally valuable in fostering a first-hand acquaintance with local scientists. This happens during the seminar itself, as well as during lunch and laboratory visits following the seminar. It is these first-hand encounters with fellow biologists that extend the sensory fields of our faculty and students alike and recruit them into the practicing guild of creative scientists.

Uldis Roze

NEW FACULTY

LOEHNER WINS TEACHING AWARD



John Loehner

John Loehner, an M.A. student in the Biology Department, was awarded the \$2500 President's Award for Excellence in Teaching by a Graduate Student. John received the award at the October 22, 1998 Faculty-Staff Assembly. John teaches Biology 11, the survey course for nonmajors. His talents were quickly recognized

and he was entrusted to teach both labs and lectures in weekend and evening sections.

Some student comments about John's teaching: "John Loehner is without a doubt THE BEST lab instructor I have ever had. Throughout the course, he was encouraging, clear, just a great guy."

"He was always willing to stay after class to clarify something or to help with any other problems."

"He was very energetic in the class and he made sure to work with us on an individual basis. Students loved him. . . . He makes sure everything is interesting and fun."

And a faculty observation of John's teaching: "a natural and gifted teacher" whose explanations are "exceedingly lucid."

In the past, John's major aspiration was to win a place on the U.S. Olympic bicycling team. In this goal he did not succeed, but he came close: he won a 1991 U.S. National championship in the 100km event, a record that still stands! He also won a bronze medal at the Pan Am Games in Havana.

John's current aspiration is winning a seat in medical school. He has used his prize money to pay admission fees at 25 medical schools. Should the acceptance letter come, students at Queens will be hard pressed to decide whether to cheer or to cry.

SALICK CENTER

The Bernard and Gloria Salick Center for Molecular and Cellular Biology (CMCB) is about to enter Phase I of its incarnation. The Center was brought into being in 1997 with a \$4.5 million endowment from Gloria Salick and Dr. Bernard Salick '60. Dr. Luc Montagnier, co-discoverer of the HIV virus, was appointed Director of the Center

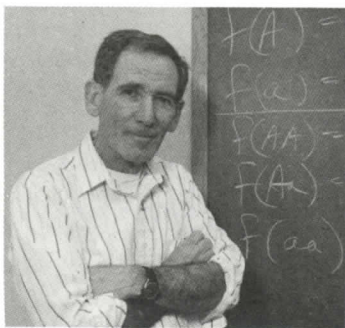
and Distinguished Professor of Biology.

This March 4000 sq. ft. of lab space will be completed in Remsen Hall for use by the Salick Center. As the Remsen facilities become functional, the first faculty members of the CMCB will be appointed by fall 1999. All will hold joint appointments in the Department of Biology. This will bring new areas of expertise to the Department, and will make possible a broader offering of new and modern courses for our students.

Later this spring, ground will be broken for a permanent facility to house the Center, with 23,000 sq. ft. of research space and an additional 10,000 sq. ft. of lecture halls and a visitors center. The building, designed by Rafael Viñoly Architects, will lie below ground in the lawn between Jefferson Hall and Kissena Boulevard. A glass facade in front will be at ground level and will face Kissena Boulevard.

The Salick Center, when completed, will add a novel and important tool of research in the field of AIDS and chronic diseases in the New York area. And one thing is already clear: it will be made up of a distinguished faculty at the top of their professional areas. This concentration of excellence can only enhance the traditionally fine education offered by the Biology Department.

WASSERMAN RETIRES



Marvin Wasserman

Marvin Wasserman, who came to Queens College in 1962, retired this January. Marvin's long and distinguished career in *Drosophila* genetics and evolution saw national recognition last year, with election as AAAS Fellow (see *Biology Currents*, v.2). His papers on chromosomal inversions and speciation in the repleta group of *Drosophila* are classics in the field.

Marvin earned a B.A. from Cornell and a Ph.D. from the University of Texas. Before coming to Queens, he held academic positions at U. Texas and at the University of Melbourne. During his stay at Queens, he spent sabbatical leaves at the University of Zurich, the University Autònoma in Barcelona, and at San Diego State University.

One of the perks of a career in population biology is scientific travel. This is because *Drosophila* are world travelers, and Marvin has collected them in their native habitats. Such travel has brought him to the southwest deserts of the U.S., to Central and South America, and to New Guinea and the islands of the South Pacific.

Over the years Marvin received major research grants: five NSF grants, two American Philosophical Society grants, and a string of PSC-CUNY grants. Considering the international stature of his research, his laboratory facilities must be described as exotic. He worked in an open space under the roof of Colwin Hall. After rains, the ceiling leaked and peeled. The lab furniture was assembled from old desks stacked end to end. He hand-washed his own glassware. Yet under these conditions, he maintained cultures of over 50 *Drosophila* species, mentored undergraduates and graduate students, and published 40 scientific papers (the last one 98 pages long). His papers remain widely cited in the scientific literature—his citation index is among the highest in the Department.

Marvin taught courses in genetics and evolution, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels, as well as lectures and laboratories in the introductory course. In his first post-retirement semester, he continues to teach on an adjunct basis—he is presenting, for non-science majors, a course in human genetics. He also continues to mentor a graduate student, continues as department M.A. advisor, and continues his research and writing.

ALUMNI VOICES

Nina Brown '97 is a Ph.D. student in the ecology-evolution program at SUNY-Stony Brook. She spent three months in 1998 as visiting researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology in Jena, Germany, then traveled to LaSelva, Costa Rica, for an eight-week OTS course in tropical biology. One of the highlights of her stay so far: climbing a 30-m tree under the supervision of a tree-climbing instructor. Nina is developing a research project to explore plant signaling.

Ellen Cho France '98 is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology at Yale. She has completed her first lab rotation on photomorphogenesis in *Arabidopsis*, and is starting a second rotation on the cytoskeleton. She sends her greetings to Dr. Szalay, whose histology course was an excellent preparation for her graduate studies in cell and tissue biology. Ellen says graduate school is much harder than what she had expected, but thinks she did relatively well at the end.

Lon Kaufman '77 is Chair of Biology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, which is primarily a commuter school with many similarities to QC. His research interest is the molecular biology of *Arabidopsis*, a small plant with a well-studied genome. Lon married another Biology alumna, Zena Gold Kaufman '77, who is using her biol-

ogy background in a job with Searle Co. They have two children and live in the suburb of Oak Park, which reminds them of the Hollis area of Queens.

Chaim Kropach, Ph.D. '73 visited the Department in November. He is living in Tel Aviv, where he is the Director of Community Branches of the Society for Protection of Nature in Israel. Chaim enjoys living in Tel Aviv, where he can walk everywhere. He was in the U.S. as leader of an Israeli tour of the U.S. National Parks.

Samuel Ogle '91 visited the Department in November with his young son. He is a resident in the surgery program at SUNY-Downstate Medical Center. Sam's brothers Adrian and William are also both practicing MDs.

Bridgit Pilchman '98 spent last summer traveling to Vienna, Slovenia, Venice, and other stops in Europe. She en-

tered the Ph.D. program at QC Biology in the fall. She has done lab rotations in molecular biology of *Arabidopsis*, and of *C. elegans*, and is now in a neurobiology rotation. Bridgit's busy schedule has forced her to give up a position with the concert choir Canticum Novum, but she has a starring role as instructor in Biology 107 labs, and is performing to critical acclaim.

Harris Taylor '61 is Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine and Endocrinology at Case Western Reserve Medical School. He recalls with pleasure the dynamic and helpful teaching of Max Hecht.

Seril Wijesundara, Ph.D. '97 returned to his native Sri Lanka immediately after defending his thesis here. He is now Acting Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Peradenya.

1998 BIOLOGY GRADUATES

David Abayev, Honors; QC *cum laude*

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Jerome Castellano

Alfred Chiang, Honors; QC *cum laude*; Dr. Jeffrey Hollander Memorial Award

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Ellen Cho France, High Honors; QC *magna cum laude*; Mardel Ogilvie Scholarship of the Queens College Retirees Association.

Pedram Ganjian, Honors; QC *cum laude*

Dorian Garbarino

Rosalie Isla, Honors

Rajiv Kakar, Honors

Jonathan Kwiat, High Honors; QC *summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa; Muriel and Philip Feigelson Award; Donald E. Lancefield Prize; Wilbur E. Gilman Scholarship of the QC Retirees Assoc.

Phyllis Leo, Honors

Andre Leung

Matthew Lorens, Honors

Ritu Matta

Melissa Mattia, High Honors; QC *summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa; Laura H. and Arthur L. Colwin Prize; Lucile Lindbergh Scholarship of the Queens College Retirees Association; Queens College Scholar

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Elizabeth Pejmanseresht, Honors; QC *magna cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa

Bridgit Pilchman, Honors

Lynne Popper

David Prince, Honors

Moris Rabanipour, Honors

Amir Rehman

Lea Rimer

Pedro Rodriguez

Martha Schechtman

Sean Smith

Janna Teytel, Honors; QC *cum laude*

Bonnie Tsisinos, Honors

Juan Urena

Herbert Weiss

Filippa Zizzo, High Honors; QC *cum laude*; Charles Darwin Prize

BIOLOGY ALUMNI FUND

Biology alumni contributed a record \$12,312 in 1998 to their home department. The number of contributors also rose to an annual record of 108. This is exclusive of the \$20,000 endowment established by Drs. Muriel and Philip Feigelson for an annual student research award in the Department.

Alumni funds are disbursed by a departmental committee. They support student and faculty research, departmental enhancement, and the development of new courses. We are deeply grateful for these demonstrations of remembrance and support.

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1998 BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT PUBLICATIONS

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