Berkeley Emeriti
TIMES

January 2007

Professor Loy Volkman

Professor of Virology and Insect Virologist in the Experiment Station,
Department of Plant and Microbial Biology, University of California, Berkeley

"Life, Viruses and the Molecular Revolution—1979-2007"

Saturday, January 27, 2007

Professor Volkman received her Ph.D. degree in microbiology from the University of Washington and joined the faculty at UC Berkeley in 1979 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Entomology with a research focus on baculovirus pathogenesis. The study of viral pathogenesis in insects is fundamental to broader efforts to develop environmentally friendly insect biological control agents. Baculoviruses infect and kill caterpillars, many species of which are agricultural pests, and Berkeley had been world-renowned for its biological control research.

After the reorganization of the biological science departments in the late 1980s, Professor Volkman moved to the Department of Plant and Microbial Biology where she has continued her study of baculovirus pathogenesis. This area of study proved to be an excellent vantage point from which to both appreciate the implications of and to participate in the molecular revolution. Professor Volkman has received several awards for her research as well as the Distinguished Teaching Award from the College of Natural Resources in 2000.

IN MEMORIAM

MELVIN WEBBER

colleague and friend

1920-2006

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Confronting the Challenge of Complexity- *in vivo veritas*

On Saturday November 11, 2006 Professor Marc Hellerstein gave a talk to the Association titled, "Biochemical Moving Pictures: *in vivo* Kinetics Reveal New Diagnostics, Diets and Drugs". Professor Hellerstein (M.D., Ph.D.) currently holds the Doris Calloway Chair in Nutritional Sciences at Berkeley.

Early in his talk Dr. Hellerstein quoted the perceptive physician and writer Lewis Thomas to the effect that meddling in complex systems, like an urban center or a hamster, will almost always make matters worse, not better. Why such pessimism? Organisms are complex adaptive systems, and because of the myriad interactions possible among their many parts an action aimed at producing one effect may well have unintended consequences, usually unfavorable. Organism components such as genes and proteins are now well-understood thanks to the rise of molecular biology. However, such reductionism still fails to reveal how all the parts work together. Contrary to popular opinion, conditioned by advertising, there really is a paucity of new drugs being developed because most of them fail to work.

Dr. Hellerstein used the example of driving in heavy traffic to illustrate his approach to dealing with unpredictable circumstances. Even teen-age drivers can accomplish this complicated action because they have vision and can react to conditions that are changing over time. He has tried to find ways to see where fundamental biological processes are going by measuring over time their behavior in living creatures. Such a study refuted the accepted view that in the most common form of leukemia, pathology results from the failure of cells to die. A time-course study revealed that whether the disease proceeded rapidly or slowly depended on the rate of cell turnover, providing a significant tool for prognosis. Studying the progression of the terrible affliction ALS (Lou Gerhig's disease) in mice, Dr. Hellerstein found that slowing with drugs the rate of turnover in the cells of the microtubules that carry nutrients to nerves, extended lifetimes about 30%.

When Dr. Hellerstein turned to the subject of diet he had the undivided attention of his audience. It has been found in a wide variety of animals (e.g., mice, flies, worms) that caloric restriction is the only diet that extends life. Mice with a 30% caloric reduction live an amazing 3-1/2 years and have fewer cancers and liver diseases. Underlying this beneficial result is a reduction of the turnover rate of all types of cells. Surprisingly, only a 5% reduction from an unrestricted intake achieves almost the same magnitude of improvement as the stringent 30% reduction. Even more remarkable, Dr. Hellerstein's studies have found that intermittency of food intake may mimic the effects of caloric restriction. For example, mice fed unrestricted amounts of food every other day, enjoyed (?) the same health benefits as those on caloric restriction diets. (Warning: Don't try this at home, not yet anyway.)

In studying the production of brain cells Dr. Hellerstein seems to have found exception to the usual result that side effects (unintended consequences) are always unfavorable. It was known that the drug Prozac stimulates new brain cell production. In testing the effects of old drugs, Hellerstein found that a number of drugs designed to lower cholesterol also do the same. In fact, the popular anti-cholesterol drug Lipitor is as effective as Prozac in stimulating new cell production in the brain.

In conclusion, Professor Hellerstein remarked that truth is found in studying living beings as well as in wine; *in vivo veritas*.

Larry Waldron

When the Berkeley Emeriti Came Within a Hairsbreadth of Losing Their Parking Privilege

When recruiting new members, we often make the claim that our membership dues represent the cheapest insurance they will ever buy. When we say this we are, of course, referring to the watchdog role the Association plays with respect to pensions, healthcare, and other retirement benefits.

This past academic year, however, the Association was able to validate its claim in a practical way for all to see. At Berkeley there is a strange, seemingly unaccountable, committee named the Oversight Committee on Parking and Transportation. This committee, which apparently has delegate authority to set parking rates, is mainly peopled by administrators, but has three faculty representatives nominated by the Academic Senate.

In May, 2006, roughly three weeks before the rates for 2006-07 were due to be announced, the oversight committee issued an all-campus memorandum saying that it had proposed, and the administration had approved, that "Emeriti … pay a standard, non-discounted rate for parking throughout the campus".

This proposal would have eliminated the emeriti parking privilege, and raised the cost of the annual emeriti parking permit from $342 to $1,440, and quadrupled the daily rate. The memorandum also announced that there would be a hearing for interested parties on Friday, May 27, three days before the 2006-07 rates were to be promulgated.

On receipt of the memorandum, the Board of Directors of the Emeriti Association met in an emergency session at which it drafted a letter to the Chancellor requesting that the Oversight Committee's proposal not be implemented, and pointing out **(a)** that emeriti were not heavy users of campus parking, **(b)** that when they came to campus it was mainly to provide uncompensated academic services, **(c)** that these services were substantial, **(d)** that the proposed changes in parking rates were likely to reduce these services, perhaps significantly, **(e)** that the emeriti parking privilege was a long-standing faculty retirement benefit that was provided at all UC general campuses and, therefore, that the proposal affected the active faculty as well as present emeriti, **(f)** that the proposal would mean that emeriti would be paying more than active faculty members since the latter were able to pay by payroll deduction and thereby gain a 25% reduction, and **(g)** that during the past five years the Berkeley emeriti had donated $231 million to the campus.

Perhaps more importantly, the Board emailed a copy of the Oversight Committee's memorandum to all the members of the Association, together with a summary of the arguments made in the Board's letter to the Chancellor. The incoming President of the Association, Professor-Emeritus Richard Malkin attended the May 27 hearing where he presented to the Oversight Committee the points made in the letter to the Chancellor. He formed the impression, however, that the committee was not inclined to budge, constantly repeating the mantra that their proposal merely represented equity.

Over the next two weeks or so, the Chancellor received an avalanche of more than sixty emails, some from very eminent emeriti, protesting the proposal. Many indicated that they would discontinue their academic services if the proposal were implemented. One distinguished emeritus wrote: "I am working as hard now without compensation as I was before I retired. I enjoy my work, but I'm damned if I will pay to do it."

Eventually the Board received an email from the Vice Chancellor – Administration and Finance saying that the annual emeriti parking rate would remain unchanged for 2006-07, but that there would be a study during the year of parking utilization. In any event, the cost of the emeriti annual permit was increased by 5.6% to $420 in keeping with the percentage increase in the active faculty rate.

Meanwhile, the issue of Emeriti Parking has been taken up by the Academic Senate's Committee on Emeriti Relations and by its Committee on Faculty Welfare, and these two committees have sent a report to the Chair of the Berkeley Division recommending: (1) that DIVCO (the Academic Senate Divisional Council) indicate its support for the historic emeriti parking fee discount; (2) that there be representation of the Senate's Committee on Emeriti Relations on the Oversight Committee; and (3) that, given the importance and sensitivity of parking issues to both emeriti and active faculty, and the desirability of improving communications, representatives of the Oversight Committee be required to meet with both the Committee on Emeriti Relations and the Committee on Faculty Welfare at least once a year.

Errol Mauchlan

Recommended Service

Norma, conscientious, reliable housekeeper seeks new clients after taking a year off to have a baby. If you or an acquaintance need a helper, call 510/524-6208 for information and reference. (Carolyn Webber)

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And That Has Made All The Difference

It was one of those Berkeley winter days—clear and crisp. Were I in the hills I could have seen the Farallones, but we were sitting in The Faculty Club. In the Great Hall were as many tables as possible, each with sparkling red napkins peering above the glasses. There was an air of anticipation; you knew the Monks would be entertaining this evening.

I was talking to Dick Malkin, current president of the Emeriti Association. He is someone who seems absolutely pleased with his life in all its phases including choices of a very young man and the luck which followed. He grew up in west and south Chicago — closer in spirit to Carl Sandburg than the Chicago Art Institute. His parents wanted him to attend the University of Chicago and eventually become a medical doctor. Leaving high school seemed the time to leave for Antioch College which had a co-operative program — three months of classes followed by work in a field related to your major. Changing from pre-med to chemistry, he was fortunate enough to work in laboratories at the National Institute of Health and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

It was clear biochemistry was his career choice. Although accepted at several eastern schools, it seemed sensible for Dick and his now wife, Carole, to drive across country to Berkeley, as neither had been to California. They found the turn-off to the University of California, but they weren't in Yellow Springs any more, and there seemed to be no university on University Avenue. After a Ph.D. in biochemistry and a postdoctoral period in Sweden, there was an opportunity to return to Berkeley and join the Department of Cell Physiology.

Cell Physiology was a very unusual Department: there was only one faculty member, Professor Daniel Arnon, and several researchers who were associated with the California Agricultural Experiment Station. Eventually this changed as other regular faculty appointments were made, and the department looked more like a traditional UC department. In the late 1980s the biology reorganization led to the formation of the Department of Plant Biology, and Dick became the first chairman. He then moved on to the College of Natural Resource's Dean's Office where he held positions as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College although he continued to teach in Biology 1A during this period of heavy administration.

What of Carole? She's the author of the well-received *The Journeys of David Toback.* What of Dick? He feels that medicine in this country is both expensive and inefficient. It is his hope that some of the very bright students he's taught over the years will make their mark, so that future treatments of illness will improve. And together they are regular walkers at Point Isabel even though they don't have their own dog.