



Opening Remarks

J. R. Huizenga Symposium

Bob Boeckman

I want to begin by welcoming you all to the Department of Chemistry and the University of Rochester on this festive occasion. We are so pleased to be able to honor John Huizenga, our esteemed colleague, with this Symposium in his honor on the occasion of his 85th birthday.

Since others have or will cover many of the details of John's scientific accomplishments and contributions, as Chair of Chemistry, I will confine my remarks to his many contributions to the Department during his 24 year association with the Department and the University of Rochester.

John's arrival in the Department predates my own by some 13 years. John arrived at Rochester during a time when there were many profound changes occurring in the Department of Chemistry. He arrived as one of a vanguard of new faculty hired during that period including Rich Eisenberg, Jake Bigeleisen, Andrew Kende, and the late Dick Schlessinger, among others. The Department shortly thereafter was awarded an NSF Center of Excellence grant that was one of the catalysts of further change including the hiring of additional young faculty and the construction of Hutchison Hall, the present home of Chemistry.

John continued a long-standing tradition of excellence in Nuclear Science at Rochester dating back to the University's intense involvement in the Manhattan project during WWII. He held appointments as Professor of Chemistry and Physics and was designated Tracy Harris Professor of Chemistry and Physics in 1978.

In addition to his involvement in research, John participated enthusiastically in the teaching program of the Department, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, for many years teaching freshman general chemistry. In fact, when we chatted on his arrival on Wednesday and I was marveling about how vigorous he was, he commented that he thought he could still handle general chemistry. I took careful note....

When I arrived at Rochester in 1980, I remember John's interest in how my program was developing even though the overlap in our scientific interests was minimal.

John assumed the Chairmanship of Chemistry in 1983 following Andy Kende's stint as Chair. I remembering serving on the committee charged with convincing him to accept the position. I remember clearly his comment that he would have to make sure his health would permit. Obviously seeing John today I can say without hesitation his stint as Chair did him no harm physically. Mentally maybe another matter, as any chair or ex-chair will tell you.

John held the Chairmanship for 5 years and arguably was responsible along with Andy Kende and Jack Kampmeier for the hiring and development of an extraordinary group of young faculty particularly in physical chemistry.

Although John has been the recipient of numerous scientific awards including election to the National Academy of Sciences, the final chapter in John's career at Rochester was made notable by his involvement as a central figure in the Cold Fusion fiasco. During this period, John was an ardent and vocal champion of quality science and the integrity of the scientific enterprise. He sought the truth even if the truth was the unpopular view. The ethical standards he embodied during his examination of the issue and data were a shining example to us all of what being a scientist is all about.

Welcome back John! Again welcome to you all. We hope that you and your colleagues enjoy the next two day's activities.