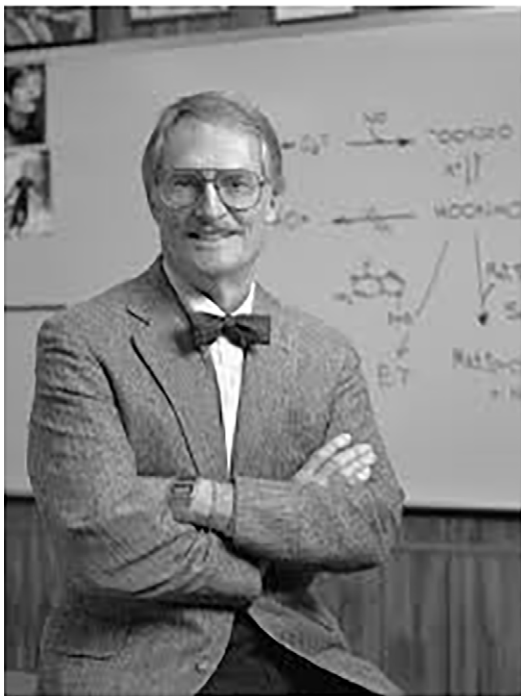


IN MEMORIAM WILLIAM AUSTIN PRYOR (1929 - 2019)



William Austin Pryor, or simply Bill Pryor to all who knew him, died on Wednesday, March 13, 2019. His beloved wife Gail Ann Erickson Pryor passed away on Thursday, May 24, 2018. A memorial service celebrating Bill Pryor's life and scientific achievements was recently held at St. Alban's Chapel on the LSU Campus. Bill's wish was to be cremated and to have his ashes placed in the Pryor family niche at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Los Angeles. Having married later in life, Bill and Gail were truly a loving couple. Gail brought joy and laughter into Bill's world and he, in turn, became devoted to her children and grandchildren.

Bill Pryor was a pioneer in the field of free radical chemistry and biology and had published numerous research and review papers, and a very influential book series entitled, "Free Radicals in Biology" that ran to six volumes between 1976 and 1984. In 1985 Bill started a reviews journal with Pergamon Press entitled, "*Advances in Free Radical Biology & Medicine*." In the same year, I started a journal focused on original research articles, also with Pergamon Press, entitled, "*Journal of Free Radicals in Biology & Medicine*." Remarkably, neither Bill nor I knew of the other's journal until we first saw them published in 1985! *Advances in Free Radical Biology & Medicine* ran to two volumes (1985 and 1986) with two issues per volume, and *Journal of Free Radicals in Biology & Medicine* also ran to two volumes (1985 and 1986) with six issues each year.

When I found out about *Advances in Free Radical Biology & Medicine* I wanted to meet with Bill to discuss how best to move forward with the two journals. Although I had met Bill in 1981 at the first Gordon Research Conference on Oxygen Radicals in Biology & Medicine (Chaired by Norman Krinsky), and again at the 2nd Oxy Radicals GRC in 1983 (chaired by Lester Packer), you have to understand that I was just a newly minted assistant professor whereas Bill Pryor was a leading scientist and an extremely influential figure in the field. Additionally, Bill had a reputation for being pretty tough and everyone told me that he did not suffer fools gladly. Thus, it was with no little sense of trepidation that I met with the illustrious Professor Pryor to discuss our journals at the 1985 Gordon Research Conference on Oxygen Radicals in Biology that Bill actually chaired. What I discovered at that meeting was a man who was both thoughtful and open to new ideas, yet also dynamic and decisive; I also discovered a man who would become my lifelong friend. We quickly decided that combining his reviews journal with my original research journal was the sensible thing to do for the field and told our editor at Pergamon, Kate McKay, that we wanted to make this change. Thus, the two journals merged in 1987 to become the publication you all know now as "*Free Radical Biology & Medicine or just FRBM*" (see K.J.A. Davies and W.A. Pryor The Radical View. *Free Radic. Biol. Med.* 3 (1987) p 1).

In 1991, following the collapse of the Pergamon 'empire,' FRBM was acquired by Elsevier although the Pergamon imprint continued to be used on the Journal until 1995 (Volume 19, No. 6). After a couple of false starts, Anthony Newman was assigned by Elsevier to be our publisher and Bill and I, the Journal, and the whole field have benefited greatly from Anthony's support, generosity, and tireless pursuit of excellence. Bill and I continued as founding co-editors-in-chief of

FRBM until 2003 (Volume 34, No. 5, March 1) when ill health in the form of a series of debilitating strokes forced Bill to prematurely retire from academic life. I can honestly say that in all those years Bill and I had only one significant disagreement, and that was at the very beginning when we could not agree on the color that should be used for the journal cover. My *Journal of Free Radicals in Biology & Medicine* was a nice, sedate royal blue color that I thought added gravitas to the publication. In contrast, Bill's *Advances in Free Radical Biology & Medicine* sported a bright yellow color, just like his previous book series. To resolve the impasse, we asked our publisher from Pergamon, to decide. She advised that Bill's beloved bright yellow color would stand out better on library shelves and, thus, attract more attention and so was born 'the yellow journal.' In retrospect, as with most things, I will gladly agree that Bill was right and I am very proud to be editor of our 'yellow journal.'

William Austin Pryor was born in St. Louis on March 10, 1929, and in 1934 moved with his parents to Los Angeles. After grammar school and junior high in Los Angeles he skipped high school and went to the University of Chicago with a scholarship, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa with Ph.B. in philosophy in 1948 and a B.S. in chemistry in 1951. He went on to complete doctoral studies at the University of California at Berkeley where he was awarded a Ph.D. in chemistry in 1954. Bill spent the next 6 years in the San Francisco Bay Area teaching at UC Berkeley, and running his own radio jazz show. He next taught at Purdue University, and eventually moved to what would become his academic home at Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana where he was promoted to Boyd Professor in 1972. He was the Founder and Director of the Biodynamics Institute that did research on biological oxidation and its role in human diseases. He was appointed as the first Director of the Pennington Biochemical Research Center in 1989 by then Louisiana Governor Roemer, and he took the Center from an empty building to an active research organization with an international reputation.

Following a nationwide search, LSU announced that Professor Mario Rivera was joining their Chemistry faculty in Spring 2018 as the inaugural William A. Pryor Chair in Chemistry. The chair honors the legacy of Professor Pryor's research in the field of oxidative biology and free radicals. The primary criterion for the chair is that the faculty member's research interests should lie at the interface of chemistry, biology and medicine, with clear relevance to human health. I know how proud Bill was to have this important endowed chair carry his name, and it is certainly a fitting and enduring testament to the impact of his research and leadership.

Bill Pryor was one of the first scientists to propose that free radicals and related oxidants can cause chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. Bill's strength was in bringing his excellent background in chemistry to bear on biological problems. His interests included the mechanism of action of vitamin E, hydrogen atom transfer from thiols to radicals, the Westheimer effect, the autoxidation of polyunsaturated fatty acids to produce Iso-prostaglandins, and the effects of the oxidants and toxins in smog (including ozone, nitric oxide, nitrogen dioxide, peroxy nitrates, peroxy nitrates, and fine particulate matter) on our lungs.

At one-point Bill Pryor was ranked as one of the 300 most cited life scientists in the world. During his career, he published over 800 articles and more than 30 books, many of which have been translated into several other languages. He won over 30 national and international awards including several from the American Chemical Society, the Oxygen Society, and the NIH; Bill was actually in the first group of scientists to be granted a MERIT award by the NIH. He also was awarded five medals by the American Chemical Society including the 2000 Gustavus John Esselen Award for Chemistry in the Public Interest. Bill was President of the Oxygen Society – now the Society for Redox Biology & Medicine – from 1996-1998 where he made significant contributions to the advancement of our field.

Music, both classical and jazz, was an important part of Bill Pryor's life. In Chicago he played in a dance band and a bebop quintet, was president of the University of Chicago Jazz Club, and was an occasional lecturer on jazz in the University's Humanities Program. He hosted radio programs on jazz starting at the University of Chicago's station, and thus began a 65-year radio career. He was on Public Radio in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1950's, and from 1989 until recently, he hosted "Classic Jazz" on WBRH in Baton Rouge. Initially, Bill would go to the WBRH studios to record his jazz shows. After his disabling strokes and retirement, however, he converted the upper floor of his house into a studio where he recorded all of his shows. Bill would work on each show for hours, tirelessly re-recording any sentence that wasn't enunciated perfectly, until he was satisfied that he had done his best.

That attitude of self-criticism and perfectionism really characterized Bill's approach to science, music, and life in general. He would worry at a problem seemingly endlessly, until he was convinced that no better solution was possible. After reaching a conclusion, however, Bill could be devastatingly forthright and decisive and, true to his reputation, indeed did not suffer fools gladly. At the same time, this was a man who always listened to alternative opinions, rarely pre-judged an issue or a person's character, and deeply treasured relationships and family. In working closely with Bill for some 20 years, and enjoying his friendship for almost 35 years, I can honestly say that it was my pleasure and privilege to have known him. Bill Pryor was a true gentleman of the 'old school,' a wonderful and inspiring colleague, and a great friend whose loss diminishes us all.

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