

# EDITORIAL

## The Alan G. MacDiarmid Annual Award for Best Interdisciplinary Research Article

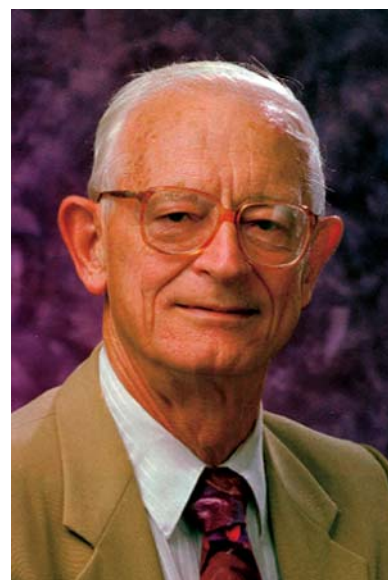
Alan MacDiarmid was one of the original four Nobel Honorary Members of the *Experimental Biology and Medicine* Editorial Board. Alan died on February 7, 2007, and the world lost one of its greatest scientific minds, while I lost a friend and hero. Alan shared the 2000 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, with Alan Heeger and Hideki Shirakawa, for the discovery of conducting polymers. Despite his incredible scientific accomplishments I will remember Alan for his tremendous spirit, kindness, compassion, and ability to stimulate everyone he came into contact with. Alan came to the University of Texas at Dallas in 2002, one year after I joined the faculty, as the James Von Ehr Distinguished Chair of Science and Technology. In 2003, when UT Dallas created the Institute of Biomedical Sciences and Technology (IBMST), and made me its first Director, I went about trying to create a world-class Advisory Board. I garnered the courage to contact Alan about joining the IBMST Board and he immediately put me at ease with his infectious enthusiasm. Alan explained that he loved the idea of an interdisciplinary research institute that melded the biological, physical, and engineering sciences and that he would be honored to serve on the Advisory Board. He also gave me every one of his telephone numbers and e-mail addresses and urged me to contact him whenever I needed to speak to him. He also took all of my contact information and with some frequency would call me on the telephone or write an e-mail to discuss some aspect of our common interest in interdisciplinary research and training.

When I was assembling the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Association of Anatomy, Cell Biology, and Neurobiology Chairs (AACBNC) (see the July 2006 issue of EBM), I decided to make the theme "The Future of Interdisciplinary Research and Training: Breaking Down The Barriers." I further decided to invite three Nobel Laureates, who shared my passion for this subject, to the meeting. The three were Alan MacDiarmid, Russell Hulse

(Nobel Prize in Physics, 1993), and Aaron Ciechanover (Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 2004). All of these gracious gentlemen accepted the invitation, but about two weeks prior to the meeting, I received a call on my cell phone from Alan. He was calling from his hospital bed one day after he had surgery to repair a hip that was broken from a fall he had taken during the holiday. He was calling to say how sorry he

was that he would not be able to fly to Aruba for the AACBNC meeting. I, of course, told him that everyone would understand his absence, but he was still feeling disappointed that he could not participate. I quickly asked whether he would be willing to have the text of the talk that he had planned to deliver, published in the July 2006 issue of EBM that was dedicated to this meeting. He immediately said yes, and I urge you to take a look at his wonderful planned presentation on what became his scientific passion in his final years: "Agrienergy (Agriculture/Energy): What does the future hold."

One of the many outcomes of the 2006 AACBNC meeting was the establishment of a relationship between the Technion in Haifa (the home of Aaron Ciechanover) and UT Dallas in research and education. In December of 2006, I led a delegation from Dallas to Haifa to continue formal discussions of this collaborative effort, and this was followed in mid January 2007 by a reverse visit from leaders within the Technion to UT Dallas. The Technion



Alan G. MacDiarmid

delegation was composed of Aaron Ciechanover, Uri Sivan, and President Yitzhak Apeloig. Alan MacDiarmid was a member of the Technion Welcoming Committee, which I chaired, and participated in teleconferences that the committee held in preparation for the Technion visit, but his health was failing. In early January 07, I received my final cell phone call from my friend, Alan MacDiarmid. When I picked up the call, there was Alan's warm and friendly voice, apologizing that his doctors would not allow him to travel from Philadelphia to Dallas for the Technion visit. Nonetheless, he wanted to make sure that I told our friends from the Technion that he was very disappointed that he could not greet them in Dallas. Further, he wanted to support me, in his wonderfully gracious manner, by congratulating me for bringing these two Universities together in a period of one year. I assured Alan that I would share his message with our guests from the Technion and thanked him for his kind comments about me. But I told him that our greatest concern was about his health and that I hoped that he would recover. That was not to be, and about one month later this great man and friend was gone.

How do you honor a man like Alan MacDiarmid? I thought long and hard about this question, and then the answer became obvious. I needed to create a lasting award in an area of interest and passion shared by Alan and myself: **interdisciplinary research**. Therefore, at the recent 2007 Experimental Biology meeting in Washington, D.C., I made a proposal to the Society of Experimental Biology and Medicine Council. The suggestion was to establish an Annual Award, in the name of Alan MacDiarmid, for the best article published in *Experimental Biology and Medicine* representing Interdisciplinary Research. I will be forever grateful to the Council that they unanimously supported my recommendation. This award, in the name of Alan MacDiarmid, has now been established in perpetuity. I know of no better way to honor my friend and colleague: Alan.

Steven R. Goodman

*Editor-in-Chief*

**Experimental Biology and Medicine**