

In Memory of Dr. Max Paul Oeschger



Dr. Max Paul Oeschger passed away on August 23, 2021. Dr. Oeschger joined the MIP department in 1985 as an assistant professor. He was previously at Johns Hopkins University. He retired from MIP as an Associate Professor in 2006 and maintained Emeritus status after his retirement.

Max was a molecular biologist from the inception of the field. He worked and collaborated with luminaries in the field, including Dan Nathans and Sydney Brenner, who went on to win the Nobel Prize. Max's scientific interests were centered around bacteriophage replication, and bacterial factors that controlled phage biology. It is in the latter context that his research identified

numerous suppressors in *E. coli* and temperature sensitive mutants of *P. aeruginosa*. Max continued his work on bacterial and phage genetics after moving to LSUHSC. He also developed methods to quantify the efficacy of disinfection methods in clinical settings. Post-Katrina, Max became a theoretical molecular biologist, with computational interests in understanding the relationship between codon use frequency, codon bias and protein evolution.

In the MIP department he made his mark on both faculty and students. Dr. Angela Amedee, who was taught by Max and was later his colleague, remarked, "I have many memories of Max – as both a student in MIP as well as a junior faculty member. He taught me a lot as a student– particularly how to be prepared when giving a presentation! From a student's perspective, we always thought he asked the toughest questions, but I appreciate how he challenged us! He was a wonderful mentor and very kind colleague."

As a colleague, Max could speak with passion and authority on a wide range of topics in science, indicative of the breadth of his scientific interests.

Outside the MIP world, Max was eclectic. He was an avid cinema buff, train spotter, propagator of day lilies, and a lover and proponent of New Orleans. Max introduced many colleagues to the New Orleans Parade Viewing Open House culture (and Uptown houses). He and his wife hosted a viewing party during the weekend of Mardi Gras. All the graduate students were there – they wouldn't miss his parties. When his MIP colleague, Dr. Joy Sturtevant, started having Krewe de Vieux Open House Parties, Max always attended, albeit unfashionably early. After he retired, he would email to confirm the KdV open house was still happening.

Our collective thoughts on Max are best summarized by the Department Head who hired him, Dr. Ron Luftig, who wrote, "Max had a sanguine view of life. His sharp, critical views of research never faltered. Rest in peace, my dear friend."

Max was preceded in death by his wife Nicole, and son Paul. He is survived by his daughter Caitlin and three grandchildren.