In Memoriam - David B. Phillips (1940 – 2023)

Dr. David B. Phillips, Professor Emeritus died peacefully at Good Samaritan Hospital on February 21st 2023. David joined Miami University in 1965 and retired from the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry in 1995.

David Phillips (Dave) was born in Rainsboro, Ohio on May 30, 1940. He attended Lynchburg High School in Lynchburg, Ohio, graduating in 1958. He earned a Chemistry degree from Miami University in 1961 and attended the University of California, Berkeley where he earned a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry in 1965. He then joined the Department of Chemistry at Miami University later that year.

The Department at the time was undergoing significant changes. Over the next few years at least 12 tenure track positions were filled. Much of the mainline courses were taught by the senior faculty. The new junior faculty, were charged with upgrading undergraduate courses for majors, with research development and qualifying the department to offer the doctorate. In addition, Chemistry moved from Krieger Hall to the present day Hughes Laboratories. During this time, Dave was much involved in these key activities. He worked in the administrative realm as Assistant Chair without portfolio, often working out details for policy issues and the like. He later served in that capacity for four subsequent Department Chairs. Last and most important, Dave served as the Chief Departmental Adviser for the majors and those faculty involved in advising as well.

In the late 60's, Dave was introduced to Alice Chung by Jim Pyle who was also on faculty at Miami. As Jim puts it, when he introduced Dave to Alice, it was "love at first sight". Jim had invited Alice to Miami to give a seminar since they were both postdocs at University of California, Davis. Alice's seminar was phenomenal and the faculty at the time implored the Chair of the Department to hire her on the spot. Alice joined the department in 1969 and she and Dave were later married in 1971. They formed an inseparable and loving pair for 52 years. Incidentally, Jim Pyle was a child hood friend of Dave's from Rainsboro.

With regard to teaching, Dave was a consummate instructor, working effectively at all times with students. Most important, Dave was very generous and patient with students. Throughout the years, Dave was instrumental in developing the Physical Measurements Lab which included both Physical and Analytical chemistry experiments. He also brought the Department into the computer age. Dave could be seen in the teaching lab, smoking his pipe, while developing computer programs on an Apple 2e for the students to analyze their collected data. When new faculty were hired, he would gladly help them with the transition into teaching and the Miami environment.

On a personal level Dave was a truly exceptional person and colleague. Several colleagues commented along these lines; "Dave was one of the best, yet most unassuming, colleagues I had during my years at Miami. He contributed in so many ways, never asking for recognition. The department will never find his kind again..." Any one that had the benefit of interacting with Dave knew he was kind and humble and more than willing to help anyone. He lived the Miami motto "Prodesse Quam Conspici".

After retirement, Dave could be seen walking to Krogers in the morning from his home on Country Club Drive. Wearing a gray hoody with a cloth satchel over his shoulder, his morning ritual was to greet passersby and pick up groceries as well as his coveted New York Times. Dave was a dedicated volunteer for Oxford Seniors' "Meals on Wheels" delivering prepared packaged meals to older adults living in the Talawanda School District. He enjoyed gardening, cooking and experiencing new culinary delights.

Dave is survived by his wife Alice Chung Phillips of Oxford, Ohio, his sister Mary Born of Brunswick, Maine and his brother Paul Phillips, Jr. of Sun City, Arizona. Dave, Mary and Paul were all chemistry majors in the Department. Dave will be interred in the Miami University Faculty section of the Oxford Cemetery on June 12th 2023.

Respectfully submitted

Andre Sommer