

## Obituary

### R. G. Boutilier

8 September 1953 – 21 December 2003

On December 21 2003, Bob Boutilier died peacefully in the intensive care ward of Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, having fought a hard four month long battle with great courage and dignity.

Bob became the fifth Editor in Chief of *The Journal of Experimental Biology* in 1994. He took over from Charlie Ellington, who continues to serve the journal on the editorial board. It was a difficult time to lead a classical comparative physiology journal. Comparative physiology was overshadowed by the enormous successes made by the molecular branch of the biological sciences. It was difficult to obtain grants and to attract bright young people into the fields typically covered by the journal.

However, Bob was an unshakeable believer in the importance and the value of comparative physiology for the future of life sciences. He answered this challenge by expanding the number of editors – carefully choosing active scientists who, while rooted in the classical areas of comparative physiology, also recognized the power of the molecular approach. By also carefully selecting the topics of the journal's yearly Review Conferences, he was able to attract a broader physiological audience to the journal. Thus, he significantly expanded the breadth of the journal. This was done without losing touch with the core interests in form and function of the journal and its readership. The success of this approach is shown by the steadily rising number of submissions to the journal, from 445 in 1994 to 809 in 2003.

The growing workload and the complexity of leading a journal with editors scattered over the globe required hiring an assistant. Bob brought in Margaret Clements, who acted as a single central administrator, keeping track of peer review and supporting editors, referees and authors alike. She soon was to become the "mother" of *JEB*, as one referee once remarked.

Under Bob, the journal improved not only in quantity but also in quality. The impact factor of the journal has steadily risen and, based on the comments of authors and reviewers, it is fair to state that comparative physiologists consider *The*

*Journal of Experimental Biology* to be their leading journal. Indeed, for many, it comes second only to *Nature* or *Science* as their preferred journal to publish in.

Bob considered the community of comparative physiologists as his large family – and the journal is run much like a family business. The editors are decentralized and are in direct contact with authors and reviewers. Bob supported the very personal touch that is so special about the journal. To this end, he developed the journal into something more than a collection of scientific papers. He hired Kathryn Phillips as the News and Views Editor, who provides short, light and intellectually appealing articles in a new front section of the journal. These snippets, highlighting particularly interesting papers from inside and outside *JEB*, have added considerably to the attention that the journal receives, not only from the media but also from non-specialist scientists. He increased the quality of the cover illustrations – some are now classics. Bob has developed *JEB* into something you want to take home to read over the weekend.

Bob anticipated the great turnabout occurring now in biological science. As molecular biology provides more and more definitive information on gene control and expression, the question of physiological significance or function becomes urgent. The journal, under Bob's guidance, is now in an excellent position to profit from the rebirth of system physiology, to which comparative physiology is making a major contribution.

Bob has contributed to science in many ways. But he has done this in a truly humane spirit. In the end, Bob is a scientific hero; he has shown us how intellectual excellence can be combined with enthusiasm, humor and human kindness.

Thank you, Bob.

**Hans Hoppeler**  
University of Bern

**Peter Lutz**  
Florida Atlantic University