

Tribute to Steven G. Boxer

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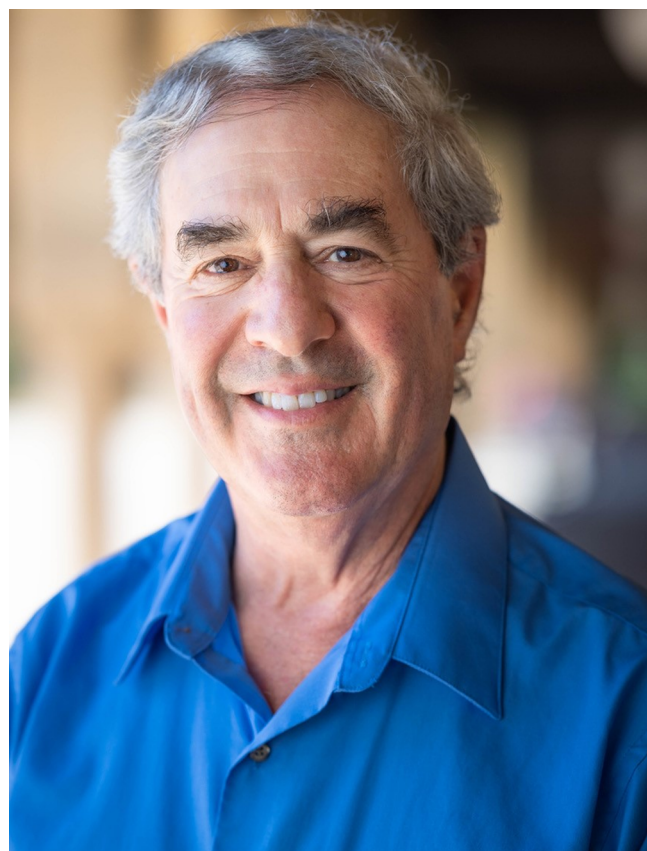
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We are honored to present this *Festschrift* to celebrate the lifelong achievements of Dr. Steven G. Boxer in advancing the field of biophysical chemistry and to express our gratitude for his leadership, mentorship, and support of the many scientists who have worked with him. The creativity, insight, and sheer diversity of topics presented in this issue are an apt reflection of Steve's central role in the development of modern biophysical and bioanalytical chemistry.

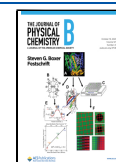
Steve's autobiography in this issue is a fascinating story of his development into the scientist and mentor that we are honoring and reveals some of his strongest characteristics developed from a young age: his boundless curiosity; his polymath interests both inside and outside science; his fearlessness in pursuing interesting questions, even at the expense of upsetting the establishment; and his commitment to being an informed and active citizen, always willing to stand up for what he believes is right. These characteristics have

propelled his significant achievements as he inspired and encouraged his mentees and the entire scientific community to explore the world around them fearlessly.

During Steve's first year of graduate school at the University of Chicago, two momentous events occurred: (1) Steve met Gerhard Closs, and (2) he was drafted, but applied for and received conscientious objector status from the draft board. In lieu of being drafted, he was assigned two years of alternative service, which he completed at the University of Chicago hospital where he worked in the laboratory of cardiologist Dr. Angelo Scanu studying serum lipoproteins. While Steve had always been most interested in theoretical approaches to important problems in physical chemistry, his time in Dr. Scanu's laboratory piqued his interest in applying modern experimental approaches to difficult problems in biochemistry, particularly NMR. It was in this period that Steve's scientific career began to focus on his life-long commitment to exploring difficult problems in biological systems using the tools of theoretical and physical organic chemistry to understand atomic-level properties of large and complex biomolecules.

One of Steve's most remarkable characteristics is his ability to identify critical questions. This both serves to target his own research interests in fruitful and productive directions and makes him an extraordinary mentor, quickly focusing his students and co-workers on the most salient issues and rapidly identifying weaknesses in prevailing theory or dogma. This talent manifests strongly in Boxer group meetings, where Steve would always get to the heart of the question at hand, was closely acquainted with the relevant literature, and started the key conversation on how to tackle the next step of a project. This was one of the most inspiring times of the week in the Boxer group and a terrific opportunity to explore research possibilities. Steve would regularly email publications that he came across, related to the broad research topics students were working on, inspiring them to engage with pertinent literature. Furthermore, he would include thought-provoking comments on these papers, enabling all the students to view the bigger picture from a critical perspective.

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Another great opportunity for students to learn from Steve came when it came time to write a paper. His writing style is clear and concise, yet never formulaic. His mentorship would shine through by letting students write the first draft of their papers and then providing helpful input on how to refine an argument, organize a discussion section, or place new findings in the proper context of a given field of literature. This would typically come with extensive comments written on the manuscript which Steve was happy to discuss and refine further. Another example of his outstanding communication skills came through listening to him deliver research seminars at meetings, which were masterfully presented and a pleasure to listen to. Steve always thought carefully about the audience he was presenting his work to and how best to explain his next idea.

Steve's seminal contributions throughout his career have led to many deserved accolades, such as (1) the ACS Arthur Cope Scholar Award (1995), (2) the Earle K. Plyler Prize for Molecular Spectroscopy (2008), (3) the ACS E. Bright Wilson Award (2013), (4) the ACS Murray Goodman Memorial Prize (2014), and (5) the Biophysical Society's Founders Award (2024), as well as elected fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1997), the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1997), the Biophysical Society (2007), the National Academy of Sciences (2008), and the Royal Society of Chemistry (2009).

We hope you enjoy this [special issue](#) in honor of Steve Boxer's lifelong achievements and contributions to biophysical chemistry.

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■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

SI Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.jpcb.3c06224>.

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Notes

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