Dan Koshland: A Retrospective

AS I WALK AROUND AT THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE, where the journal *Science* has its home, I encounter one framed cover after another. Many of them are from issues published between 1985 and 1995, when Dan Koshland was at work as its editor, creating the journal’s process infrastructure and bringing aboard many of the Editorial and News staff with whom I am privileged to work today. Pick your way through this issue and explore it; in substantial part, it is the magazine Dan created.

Two weeks ago, a few days after Dan’s death, many of his colleagues spoke about his passionate enthusiasm for good science of all kinds. Because he had come to *Science* as its first nonresident editor, trailing extraordinary scientific credentials, it would not have been surprising had his new staff been intimidated. They gave that up on discovering that he liked to manage by walking around and that he relished productive argument. He was a regular contributor to the journal himself; indeed, a posthumous contemporary essay classifying strategies of scientific discovery is on p. 761 of this issue.

Readers may recall one occasional persona of Dan’s: the self-confident Dr. Noitall. Well, he may have been Dr. Noitall for that audience, but in house he was Dr. Letsdebate. The memories disclosed by his former staff colleagues are as varied as they are rich: Dan’s love for a novel piece of science, his thoughtful holiday habit of bringing a box of Godiva chocolates to each editor and assistant, and his outrageous sense of humor. My colleague Monica Bradford, who was there for much of Dan’s editorship, describes him as a “transformationist.” He changed procedures, people, and projects wherever he thought it might do some good; one innovation (among many) was the first *Science* International office in Cambridge, UK, where many of our Editorial and News colleagues work.

Dan’s teacher Wendell Latimer brought him to Glenn Seaborg, an extraordinary project manager with whom he worked on the Manhattan Project. He later underwent a conversion to biochemistry that brought him through the University of Chicago, Brookhaven National Laboratory, and eventually to the University of California, Berkeley. Much of this history is given in a 1996 personal account in the *Annual Review of Biochemistry* (http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/to/biochem/65/1), entitled “How to Get Paid for Having Fun.” At Brookhaven and later at Berkeley, he performed a stunning series of experiments demonstrating that protein conformation was flexible, and these findings led him away from the lock-and-key model to the now widely accepted “induced-fit” model of enzyme/substrate interactions. Dan’s experience in breaking a paradigm was an example for his editors: Understanding that exceptional results require exceptional evidence, he nevertheless encouraged them not to overlook surprises simply because they seemed improbable.

After his first wife Marian Koshland passed away, Dan made a very large gift to the National Academy of Sciences, of which Dan and Marian (aka Bunny) were both members. It honored her by creating a museum that illustrates the value of basic science and its importance to society. A committee was assigned to monitor the process of exhibit development, with Dan as chairperson; as his nominal co-chair, I soon figured out that I was expected to support him and if necessary calm him down when things weren’t suiting him. Dan had views, and a way of expressing them forcefully (that was fair; it was, after all, his money). It was an enjoyable exercise: Dan was right more often than not, and the Marian Koshland Science Museum is a jewel that teaches visitors—adults and kids—in a participatory way about matters such as climate change and genomics.

I am grateful to Dan for his wisdom, his friendship, and his legacy, and for encouraging me as I considered coming to *Science*. The legacy is shared by a dozen present News and Editorial staff who served in Dan’s decade, and by the young staff who later fell to his persuasiveness as a recruiter. “Dan’s people” in turn created an institution strong and exciting enough to attract a new crop of colleagues to continue *Science’s* growth. We owe Dan much for his role in shaping the place, the conditions, and many of the people with whom we work.

– Donald Kennedy