

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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Department of
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En Quête des Temps de Recherche Perdus.

The current issue (#240) marks the completion of twenty unbroken years of existence of this Newsletter. Because this is not a completely trivial period of time, perhaps the event ought not to go completely unmarked. Hence the historical remarks which follow.

The Newsletter was started in October of 1958 by Aksel A. Bothner-By and myself, at what was then Mellon Institute (now part of Carnegie-Mellon University) in Pittsburgh, PA. This original incarnation of the Newsletter was named Monthly Ecumenical Letters from Laboratories Of NMR, with the not surprising and semi-pronouncable abbreviation MELLONMR in fact surviving long after the official name of the Newsletter had changed. For your amusement, the first issue of MELLONMR is reproduced without change as pages 50 - 59 of this, the 240th consecutive monthly issue.

At the end of issue #1 is the original mailing list, a non-systematic creature of Aksel's and my then limited acquaintance. While I would hesitate to advance a moral or conclusion to the observation, you may note that the following are still subscriber/participants in the Newsletter after 20 years: Herb Gutowsky, Paul Lauterbur, Charlie Reilly, Jack Roberts and Jim Shoolery, in addition of course to Aksel Bothner-By and myself. (Is it not remarkable that none of the seven of us has aged during a 20-year span!) Inspection of the mailing list for issues #2 and #3 turns up several more names of those who are today still getting the Newsletter. Perhaps I will dig up the occasional letter from the early years for inclusion in future issues of the Newsletter so that we can think fondly or in stupefied amazement at what passed for news years ago.

From October 1958 through January 1964, (issues #1-#64) the entire cost of the Newsletter was born by Mellon Institute, through Aksel Bothner-By's persuasiveness with management and his willingness to commit the necessary funds from his departmental budget. I personally feel that it is appropriate we remember this substantial act of generosity which enabled the launching and firm foundation of this 20-year enterprise.

MELLONMR #1 contains some items of mild interest: you will find, for instance, that the philosophy and policies under which the Newsletter operates today are (except for financial matters!) quite indistinguishable from those originally concocted. This fact, together with the self-regulating nature of the Newsletter mailing list suggests that few changes are in order for the future.

Issue #1 also contains the first of several discussions of the problem of standards and referencing of NMR spectra, a topic which even today continues to charm (?) the likes of Ted Becker, Wallace Brey, Jack Roberts and - when forced! - myself. Plus ça change,.....

Less obvious in issue #1 is the pain and artistry involved in producing the then-superb 60 mc [sic] spectra of isobutylene. These spectra represented almost state-of-the-art quality obtainable from a commercial spectrometer, and were obtained on one of the very first, very new Varian HR-60 spectrometers. This wonderful machine with its remarkable spectral dispersion was unadorned with such modern frivolities as controlled temperature cooling water for the magnet, shim coils, or field/frequency locking. (What the magnet did have, however, was protection from room air currents, in the form of a lavender vinyl shower curtain adorned by many swans; this optimal design due to Christine Bothner-By.) Field homogeneity was changed - occasionally improved - by use of a long-handled wrench manipulated by an 8-foot long pipe. Sweeps were routinely calibrated by the imposition of audio sidebands, and couplings measured by graphical interpolation or wiggle beats. Not knowing any better, one didn't mind these laborious procedures, for we were very happy with the remarkable 60 mc dispersion, and truly ecstatic at having finally been emancipated from the ancient torture devices of the Sanborn and the equally infamous G-10 recorders. The term "good old days" did not apply to all aspects of NMR spectroscopy.

In January of 1964 an excellent opportunity at the Illinois Institute of Technology enticed me to move my family and the Newsletter to Chicago. (I think that on any given day, at least two of my three girls have already started to forgive me.) Thus the totally unpronounceable new name of IITNMRN ran from issue #65 through #119. For the first 3½ years of IITNMRN, the entire expense of the Newsletter was born by the Illinois Institute of Technology, until the Newsletter had grown to such a size and mailing list that it was no longer reasonable or practical to rely on IIT's generosity. The back cover of the August 1967 issue (#107) contains a substantial list of corporations and universities in this country and abroad who answered the call for support for the Newsletter, and who continued to provide all necessary funds so that the Newsletter could be mailed to participant/recipients without charge. This meta-stable financial posture continued until ca. October 1969, at which time the paid subscription system was established.

Subscription income has always been, and continues to be, much less than is needed to cover the costs of producing and mailing the Newsletter. We have continued to be dependent on the goodwill and generosity of our Sponsors, Contributors and Advertisers. Let me urge those who value the Newsletter to note the list of Sponsors and Contributors which is printed in each month's issue, and to say a kind word to them from time to time. Likewise, please notice those who advertise in the Newsletter and

tell them (better yet - show them) that their efforts and financial support are appreciated. We have lost advertisers in the past for want of feedback to them from the readership they are trying to reach. In the face of continually rising production and mailing costs, we still need a few more advertisers to put the Newsletter into a really healthy financial posture. Your efforts along these lines will really be appreciated. Please note that most of our advertisers have been with us on a regular, monthly basis since the inception of advertising in the July 1972 issue (#166), and we all owe them an especial debt of gratitude.

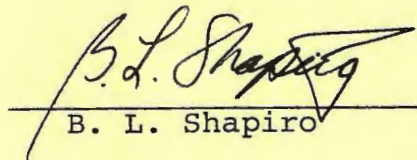
Although it is always dangerous and possibly unjust to single out one particular individual (i.e., non-corporate) Sponsor, I can not help but note for all that Professor Robert Kosfeld of the TH of Aachen, Germany has been a long-standing, exceptionally generous Sponsor of the Newsletter. Those of us who have had the pleasure of visiting Professor and Mrs. Kosfeld and members of his group in Aachen will not be surprised at this outstanding contribution to the general welfare of the NMR community.

Over the years, the Newsletter mailing list has grown in a rather slow but steady manner. Despite financial pressures to do otherwise, we have stuck quite faithfully to the policy of requiring participation in the Newsletter by sending in technical contributions as a criterion for receiving the Newsletter. Without this very infrequently suspended policy, and the unfortunately non-trivial financial part of the subscription, growth and the present size of the mailing list would have been much greater. At present, we send out approximately 275 copies per month, and a survey of a few years ago indicates that each copy is read by approximately six individuals. Our present mailing list includes subscriber/participants in 31 states of the U.S.A., 7 Canadian provinces, and a total of 22 countries.

The nature of the contributions to the Newsletter has continued over the years to range over a broad spectrum, which we feel is very healthy. We will continue the policy of letting anything reasonable appear in the Newsletter - new developments in theory and practice, new hardware and software, data, notices of forthcoming meetings, positions available and wanted, etc. [By "anything reasonable" our veteran readers will understand items other than reports of new instances of non-equivalent methylene protons, or how to clean magnet cooling coils.] Until Wes Andersen and John Waugh defected from the mailing list, and before age and status stodgified the written efforts of the likes of Ray Freeman, Paul Lauterbur and Alex Pines, we could even count on the occasional contribution of a humorous (intentionally so) nature. Surely there are others who can come up with the occasional letter strictly pour s'amuser - I would hate to think that we have nothing more entertaining to look forward to than the next locker-room-type acronym.

Since August of 1968, you have been receiving the TAMU NMR Newsletter. The Newsletter is now completely self-supporting, i.e., all costs are born by funds raised by subscriptions, Sponsorships and Contributorships, and Advertising. Since 1971, the smooth operation of the Newsletter has been due in major part to the competence, financial accumen and patience of my highly valued assistant, Mrs. Loretta M. King. Mrs. King handles almost all of the operations aspects of the Newsletter, and is capable with such diverse tasks as handling printers, seeing that your Newsletter is mailed with attractive stamps, arranging for advertising and billing, and she has even managed to somehow cope with the Byzantine mysteries of State bureaucracies and the Italian postal system!

Although we feel that by now the Newsletter has settled into a fairly adequate routine - aside from the ever-present problem of finances - we are always open to suggestions for the improvement of any aspect of the Newsletter. Please do not hesitate to write or call if you have an idea, or a lead for a new Advertiser, etc. With your guidance and support, we look forward to continuing the Newsletter indefinitely.


B. L. Shapiro

11 September 1978