

INTRODUCTION OF PRESIDENT STEVEN A. NADLER

Gerald W. Esch

Department of Biology, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27106

Several years ago, I was asked to become Editor of the *Journal of Parasitology*. The Council inquired how I would organize our Editorial Board. I informed them that I wanted to divide our discipline into distinct fields and appoint an associate editor who would have the responsibility for each one. One of the areas I wanted to include was genetics/evolution. My feeling at the time was that this part of parasitology was about to take off and I wanted someone who was at the cutting edge, in other words, a real leader.

For several years before that, I had made it a priority at our annual meeting to go and listen to any paper that dealt with genetics or evolution. At our meeting in Vancouver in 1989, I heard a paper dealing with ascaridoid phylogeny using ribosomal-RNA sequence analysis that was read by a young postdoc parasitologist at the Museum of Natural Science, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. I was impressed and I remember thinking, “this guy is going places.” His name was Steven A. Nadler, and he has gone places, several in fact. They have, at least in part, led him to the presidency of our Society. It is my pleasant task to briefly tell you about some of the places he has been, some of what he has accomplished, and then to introduce him as our president and our speaker this afternoon.

Steve was born in St. Louis and that is where he grew up as well. He once remarked to me that he was a St. Louis Cardinal fan, and I naturally asked whether he had played baseball in high school. I thought that he had the look of a pitcher or a first baseman. He replied, “No, I played water polo,” making him the first water polo player I had ever met.

A teacher in high school initially kindled his interest in biology, especially botany. So, he trundled off the Southwest Missouri State College in Springfield. He enrolled in a botany course his first semester, but was turned off by a hugely boring professor. Luckily for us, his interest in biology persisted. When he was a junior, he left Springfield and enrolled in the University of Hawaii. His sister was a graduate student there and had invited him to come out for a year and stay with her. It was while he was at the University of Hawaii that he had his first exposure to parasitology from an invertebrate biologist named Sidney Townsend. After learning from Townsend that he could make a life for himself with an advanced degree in parasitology, he considered several different universities and programs. Following graduation from Southwest Missouri State, Steve headed for the LSU Medical Center in New Orleans.

His original attraction was for medical parasitology and immunology. But this did not pan out. Early in his grad student career, he had met Carter Atkinson, who was to become one of Steve’s real buddies during his stay at LSU. It was Carter who introduced Steve to *Hepatozoon* in snakes, and a parasite on which he would focus his master’s degree using electron microscopy under the tutelage of Dr. Joe Miller. A student of Horace Stunkard, Miller was also the mentor of Dick Lumsden, one of the early and best electron microscopists in parasitology. On completing his master’s research, Steve was sort of in a quandary about what direction in which to go. During this time,

he had been turned on by the fieldwork of Carter Atkinson, i.e., he found that he relished in traipsing around the woods and swamps in that part of Louisiana. This experience was also an epiphany of sorts, because Steve then realized his research interests had shifted away from medical parasitology and immunology toward the study of parasite life cycles and systematics.

It was at this point that he came to know another interesting person, Dr. Herb Dessauer, a biochemist who had just moved into Steve’s building. Herb was a fascinating man. During World War II, he was a meteorologist and, after the war, he enrolled in medical school at LSU. After a year and a half, though, he quit medicine and enrolled in graduate school, ultimately becoming the first biochemistry Ph.D. to finish at LSU, where he then stayed on as a faculty member. Joe Miller suggested to Steve that he go and talk with Dessauer, which he did. It was yet another break for Steve.

Steve learned that Herb was one of the first scientists to combine biochemistry, genetics, and systematics through the use of starch gel electrophoresis in the 1960s. Steve recognized the possibilities that existed in parasitology for the application of this relatively new technology and he jumped at the bait. Herb Dessauer and Joe Miller were to become his dissertation co-advisors. Steve announced at his first Ph.D. committee meeting that his initial choice of a study organism was *Giardia*. The selection was a good one because there had not been much done at the time on this parasite. But it was a bad choice too because the research would require *in vitro* culture, which at the time was rather dicey because there was no guarantee of success. His advisors told him to back off and he did—good advice from his advisors, and good for Steve in that he accepted the advice. Now though, what to do? At the same meeting of his committee, Herb indicated that size, or the amount of tissue, was an important factor in electrophoresis. Steve took the bait and suggested to his committee that he switch the model from *Giardia* to ascaridoids. The committee agreed and the problem was resolved.

He completed his Ph.D. in 1985. Then, it was time for a postdoc. His first choice was to head up to the University of Iowa and George Cain, which would have been a great partnership. Unfortunately, this did not work out. Steve’s second choice was Bronislaw Honigberg at the University of Massachusetts. He was given two alternatives for research, one had to do with African trypan and the second with *Trichomonas gallinae*. Steve was newly married and did not cherish the idea of being in the field in Africa and away from his new bride for long periods, so *T. gallinae* became his selection.

However, before Steve left for U-Mass, a serendipitous event was to take place, one that was to profoundly affect the course of his career. Herb Dessauer had established a close working relationship with Dr. Mark Hafner, who was on the staff at the Natural Science Museum in Baton Rouge. Herb also knew that Ken Corkum, then the parasitologist in the Zoology Department at LSU, was about to retire. Dessauer thought that either the