



PSBMB Newsletter

Philippine Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

December 2004

New Board of Directors elected for 2004-2005

The PSBMB elected the new members of the Board of Directors for 2004-2005 during the 30th Annual Convention last December. Prof. Peter Torres chaired the Election Committee and presided over the election process for the twelve-member board.

During the first meeting of the Board last January 20, 2004, the Board elected the Officers. Dr. Gloria de Castro-Bernas, Assistant to the Rector for Research and Development of the University of Santo Tomas was elected President. Dr. James Villanueva of the Institute of Chemistry of University of the Philippines-Diliman was elected Vice-President. Dr. Mafel C. Ysrael of the Faculty of Pharmacy of UST was named Secretary. Dr. Ameurfin D. Santos and Dr. Virginia D. Monje of the National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology of UP Diliman were elected Treasurer and Auditor respectively. Dr. Nina Rosario L. Rojas of the Department of Chemistry of the Ateneo de Manila University was named Public Relations Officer.

Dr. Bernadette Ramirez joins the board *ex-officio* as immediate past president. Reelected from the 2002-2003 Board were Dr. Bernas, Dr. Santos, Dr. Ysrael, and Board Members Dr. Gisella P. Concepcion of the Marine Science Institute of UP Diliman; Dr. Marilou G. Nicolas, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences of UP Manila; and Professor Peter Torres of UST.

Newly elected board members Professor Leslie Michelle M. Dalmacio and Professor Grace Fe B. Yu of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of the UP-Manila College of Medicine complete the twelve-member Board. — *N.R.*

Celebrating the Genome: The 30th Anniversary Convention of the PSBMB December 2003

The PSBMB celebrated the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the structure of DNA and the completion of the human genome at its 30th Annual Convention last December 1-2 at the University of the Philippines-Manila. The event also celebrated the 50th Foundation Year of its co-sponsor, the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of the College of Medicine at the University of the Philippines in Manila. Dr. Bernadette Ramirez recaps the event in full in her President's Report on page 2.

In related news, Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, passed away last July 28. See feature on the back page.—*N.R.*

PHILIPPINE SOCIETY FOR
BIOCHEMISTRY & MOLECULAR
BIOLOGY

In cooperation with THE DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY &
MOLECULAR BIOLOGY, UP COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
on the occasion of its 50th Foundation Year

30th Annual Convention
Celebrating the Genome

...50 Years of the Double Helix
...Completion of the Human Genome Project
...30 Years of the PSBMB

1 - 2 December 2003
College of Medicine
University of the Philippines Manila

The President's Report 2003

Bernadette L. Ramirez, Ph.D.
Immediate Past President (2002-2003)

The 30th Annual Convention of the PSBMB

The PSBMB 30th Annual Convention was held last 1-2 December 2003 at the University of the Philippines Manila. It was jointly sponsored by the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of the College of Medicine on the occasion of its 50th Foundation Year. Aptly themed, "Celebrating the Genome," the 30th Annual Convention also coincided with 50 years of the discovery of the structure of DNA by famed scientists Watson and Crick. The convention also celebrated the completion of the Human Genome Project, a milestone scientific achievement that is expected to provide a major impact to the human race in all aspects of health and disease.

The Convention Venue. The 30th PSBMB Convention was held at the University of the Philippines Manila. PSBMB "came home" to UPM Manila after thirty years, when it was established by its founders led by faculty and scientists from the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of the College of Medicine.

The Organizing Committee. The over-all Chair of the Organizing Committee for the 30th Annual Convention was Dr. Bernadette L. Ramirez. Aably assisting the chair is Dr. Mariluz Mojica-Henshaw who served as the Vice-Chair of the Organizing Committee. The convention committees and their respective chairs were as follows: Scientific Program Committee - Dr. Gloria de Castro-Bernas, Secretariat and Registration Committee – Prof. Leslie M. Dalmacio, Ways & Means Committee – Dr. Bernadette L. Ramirez, Physical Arrangements Committee – Dr. Marilou G. Nicolas, Awards Committee – Gisela P. Concepcion, Committee for Newsletter and Website – Antonio C. Laurena, Elections Committee – Prof. Peter Torres and Committee on Volunteers – Dr. Fred Guillergan.

Messages. The 30th Convention was heralded by congratulatory messages from special people in the opening pages of the Souvenir Program. Dr. Manuel Dayrit, Secretary of Health, underscored the significance of the 30th Annual Convention in "the new understanding of the genetic revolution and its impact to human health and disease, food production and the interaction of the environment with DNA." Administrative officials from UP Manila, led by Dr. Marita V.T. Reyes (Chancellor), Dr. Jaime Z. Galvez Tan (Vice-Chancellor for Research), Dr. Cecilia V. Tomas (Dean, College of Medicine) and Dr. Yasmyne C. Ronquillo (Chair, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology), all gave welcome messages to the

Convention participants and wishes for a successful convention.

Opening Ceremonies. Dr. Marita V.T. Reyes, UPM Chancellor welcomed all the participants and guests to Convention. This was followed by an Inspirational Message given by Dr. Lourdes J. Cruz, NAST Academician and Past President of PSBMB. She spoke of the earlier years and beginnings of the PSBMB up to the present celebration of its 30th Anniversary. She mentioned the pioneering vision of the founding members of the society – Drs. Solita Cama-Besa and Clara Y.L. Sylianco – in establishing the PBS to unite the biochemists in the Philippines to a common goal of furthering education and research. The Keynote Address was delivered by Dr. Manuel Dayrit, Secretary of Health. He spoke about the role of genome technology in the future health of the Filipino people and admonished the PSBMB members to help bridge the gap between the laboratory and the healthcare setting.

Scientific Program. Key Lectures (6), Invited Lectures (4) and Parallel sessions (8) dealt with topics related to health, agriculture, biotechnology and bioinformatics. These were supplemented with Poster Sessions (43), Trade Exhibits (7), Trade Exhibitors' Lectures (4) and Young Scientists' Forum (4). The program highlight of the Scientific Program was the Clara Y. Lim-Sylianco Lecture by Dr. Marcelina B. Lirazan. She spoke on the "Purification and Characterization of Novel Peptides from *Conus radiatus* Venus."

Awards. Best Paper in the Young Scientists' Forum. The award for Best Paper in the Young Scientists' Forum went to Ms. Kathrina L. Marcelo of the University of the Philippines Diliman for her paper entitled "Initiation of Human Schwannoma and Murine Neural Precursor Cell Lines." Her paper was chosen over 3 other contestants from the University of the Philippines Manila and Diliman. She was given a cash prize and an award certificate. Three winners were also chosen as Best Poster for the following categories: Health, Agriculture, and Bioinformatics.

Elections of the Board of Directors years 2004-2005 were also held. See page 1.

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Silliman University hosts the 31st PSBMB Annual Convention together with RevUp debut

This year's Annual Convention of the PSBMB will be held on 3-4 December 2004 at the Bethel Guest House, Dumaguete City. Silliman University is co-sponsoring the event. The theme is "Biosciences as Catalyst for Bioindustries." The schedule includes nine plenary lectures, nine parallel sessions featuring invited lectures and contributed papers, 34 posters and five participants in the Young Scientists Forum.

The first RevUp (REView and UPdate) satellite workshop for continuing education in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology will also be held at Silliman University on the 2nd of December.

Amendments to the PSBMB Constitution will also be on the agenda for the business meeting of the PSBMB.

FAOBMB and IUBMB Meetings

The PSBMB is a member of the Federation of Asian and Oceanian Biochemists and Molecular Biologists (FAOBMB) and an adhering body to the International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (IUBMB).

PSBMB Newsletter readers might wish to note next year's 9th IUBMB Conference to be held jointly with the 30th FEBS Congress in Budapest, Hungary on 2 -7 July 2005. The theme is "The Protein World: Proteins and Peptides: Structure, Function and Organization" with a sub-theme "Science is Fun: a Conference for your Creativity." Details are available at the Conference website at <http://www.febs-iubmb-2005.com/>.

The President's Report (continued)

Other Activities. Aside from the Annual Conventions, the PSBMB embarked on other activities. In 2002, the PSBMB focused its attention on the promotion of scientific knowledge and education. In order to achieve this goal, the PSBMB sponsored a year-round *Scientific Lecture Series* in cooperation with the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of the UP College of Medicine. During the year 2003, this activity was continued by the PSBMB together with its University co-sponsor. The lecture series schedule for 2003 was as follows:

DATE	TITLE OF TALK	NAME OF SPEAKER	SPEAKER AFFILIATION
15 Jan. 2003	Groundwater Contamination	Niall Henshaw	University of Utah, USA
17 Mar. 2003	Innovations in Biochemistry Education	Dr. Marilou G. Nicolas	College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines Manila
17 Jul. 2003	Structure-based Design of Antibodies and Anti-Infectives	Dr. Michael A. Kron	College of Human Medicine, Michigan State University, USA
9 Sep. 2003	Stem Cell Research	Dr. Mariluz Mojica-Henshaw	College of Medicine, University of the Philippines Manila
Oct. 2003	Natural Products Research at Marine Science Institute	Dr. Giselle Padilla-Concepcion	Marine Science Institute, University of the Philippines Diliman
Nov. 2003	Drug Discovery for Pain	Dr. Baldomero Olivera	University of Utah
Nov. 2003	Molecular Basis of Alzheimer's Disease	Dr. Bernadette L. Ramirez	College of Medicine, University of the Philippines Manila

The 17th FAOBMB SYMPOSIUM was held jointly with the 2nd IUBMB Special Meeting and the A-IMBN Conference at the Imperial Queen's Park Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand last 22-26 November 2004. The theme of this symposium was "Genomics and Health in the 21st Century," and covered topics from Human Health and Diseases, Drug Discovery and to Toxicology, Food, Agriculture, Environment, and Biochemical Education. Details are available at the Symposium web site at <http://www.thaibmbsymp2004.org/>.

The PSBMB Newsletter is published by the Philippine Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. Editor-in-Chief: Nina Rosario L. Rojas. The other members of the Newsletter and Website Committee for 2004 are Marilou G. Nicolas and Edumar Madlangbayan. Visit us on the web at <http://www.psbmb.org>.



Francis Crick (1916-2004)

Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the three-dimensional structure of DNA, passed away last July 28 in San Diego, California at the age of 88. He is most remembered for elucidating the double helix structure of DNA with James Watson based on the x-ray diffraction data of Rosalind Franklin and Maurice Wilkins in 1953. Crick, together with Watson and Wilkins, won the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1962 for their "discoveries concerning the molecular structure of nucleic acids and its significance for information transfer in living material."

James Watson remains the only living person in this group. Rosalind Franklin died of ovarian cancer in 1958 at the age of 37, while Maurice Wilkins, the "Third Man of the Double Helix" as he called himself in his 2003 autobiography, passed away last 5 October 2004.

Francis Harry Compton Crick was born on 8 June 1916, in England. Science appealed to him at an early age, but, as he wrote in his 1988 autobiography *What Mad Pursuit*, he feared that, "by the time I grew up—and how far away that seemed!—everything would have been discovered." His mother was wise enough to reassure him that there would be plenty left for him to discover, and she was right.

After elucidating the structure of DNA, Crick continued studying the central dogma of molecular biology. He put forth the adapter hypothesis, in which a smaller molecule (later found to be tRNA) translated the nucleic acid code into the amino acid sequence of proteins. He established with Sydney Brenner that the genetic code was a triplet code, and came up with the wobble hypothesis to explain the degeneracy of the code. He also worked on aspects of the origin of life and selfish genes. Along the way, he described the knobs-into-holes model for coiled-coil proteins and showed how protein structures could be determined by x-ray crystallography using heavy atom derivatives.

In 1977, he moved from Cambridge to the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California and started working more fully on unraveling the neural correlates of consciousness. It was yet another interest that passed his "Gossip Test" (what you gossip about is what you are really interested in). He brought to this new field his trademark curiosity, creativity, and scientific rigor, a rare ability to distill a problem into its essential questions and design experiments to search for answers. He inspired many younger scientists to enter neurobiology, helping transform it from a more speculative field into one approached with the tools of rigorous experimental science.

In 1974 he wrote, "rather than believe that Watson and Crick made the DNA structure, I would rather stress that the structure made Watson and Crick." The double helix gave him fame, but the power of his intellect touched much more than DNA, just as his personal character touched and inspired others.

Crick is survived by his wife, artist Odile Speed, who incidentally drew the double helix diagram for the 1953 *Nature* paper; two daughters by Odile; a son by a previous marriage, and six grandchildren. Crick's first wife is Ruth Doreen Dodd. They were divorced in 1947. – N. R.

Photo: www.nobel.se

Bioinformatics Group Launched at 30th Annual PSBMB Convention

The 30th Annual Convention of the PSBMB saw the launch of the Network for Integrative Multidisciplinary Bioinformatics Utilization Strategies (NIMBUS). Two founding members of NIMBUS, Dr. Richard Bruskiwicz (International Rice Research Institute) and Dr. Gloria Despacio-Reyes (formerly with the University of the Philippines Open University and now with IRRI) also gave lectures at the Convention to showcase the power and importance of this Bioinformatics to Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

The bioinformatics group began a technical working group was gathered together in April 2003 by the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development and the Advanced Science and Technology Institute of the Department of Science and Technology in a series of roundtable discussions. The working group of about 38 members from 16 different institutions formed NIMBUS, which was formally recognized by the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission on March 17, 2004. It held its first national bioinformatics conference last October 15, 2004.

The Board of Directors of NIMBUS for 2004 are Dr. Gloria Despacio-Reyes (IRRI)—Chair; Engr. Denis Villorente (ASTI)—Vice-Chair; Dr. Celia Torres-Villanueva (UPD)—Secretary; Dr. Gloria Bernas (UST; present President, PSBMB)—Treasurer; Mr. Darwin Santos (PCASTRD)—Auditor; and Dr. Richard Bruskiwicz (IRRI) and Dr. Damasa Macandog (UPLB) as Board Members. The NIMBUS incorporators are Gloria Bernas and Josefino Castillo of UST, Ma. Corazon de Ungria and Celia Torres-Villanueva of UP Diliman, Salvador Caoili of UP Manila, Ferdinand Fajardo of DLSU, Damasa Macandog of UPLB, Gloria Reyes of IRRI, Nina Rosario Rojas of AdMU, and Denis Villorente of ASTI. – N.R.