



Introduction

Jim Maki¹

Published online: 9 June 2018

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Ralph Mitchell

Founding Editor of *Microbial Ecology*

Gordon McKay Professor of Applied Biology, Emeritus

Ralph Mitchell obtained his B.A. in Microbiology in 1956 from Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. Subsequently, he applied to Cornell University for graduate school and received his Ph.D. in Microbiology in 1961. Eventually, he became the Gordon McKay Professor of Applied Biology in what is now known as the John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at Harvard University.

The research he and members of his laboratory have conducted over the years include seminal investigations of water pollution microbiology, bacterial adhesion, biofilms, biofouling in marine environments, corrosion of metal substrata, and most recently, microbial deterioration of cultural artifacts. In this latter realm, some areas of study have included samples from King Tut's Tomb, the USS Arizona, Apollo Spacesuits at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Mayan archeological sites in southern Mexico, and most recently the microbial degradation of the skin of the Chinchorro Mummies of Ancient Chile.

While at Harvard, he recognized there was a niche in the growing field of microbial ecology and along with Springer, founded the journal *Microbial Ecology*, the first such dedicated entirely to this subject. The initial issue of *Microbial Ecology* appeared in December 1974. Some of the authors of papers in that first issue included among others, Kevin Marshall, Holger Jannasch, Edward Carpenter, A.E. Walsby, Rita Colwell, Carol Litchfield, Hans van Gemerden, Martin Alexander and Ron Atlas, some of the best known microbial ecologists in their respective fields. The journal is currently in its 75th volume, has published 267 issues containing 3857 (and growing) articles and has an impact factor of 3.63 all pointing to the success and relevance of this journal since its inception.

The articles presented in this volume were submitted to honor Ralph Mitchell as a scientist, educator, and mentor. In addition, those who know him, recognize him as a caring father and husband, and for many, a lifelong friend.

✉ Jim Maki
james.maki@marquette.edu

¹ Department of Biological Sciences, Marquette University,
Milwaukee, WI 53201–1881, USA