Editorial

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As of January 2010, Professor Christopher Ashley (Dept. of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics, University of Oxford) retired as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Muscle Research and Cell Motility (JMRCM), which he cofounded in 1980 with Richard Tregear (the first Editor-in-Chief). In their first editorial, they pointed out that the Journal was “*intended for everyone interested in the problems of biological motion*”, and that “*there are enough interests in common throughout this range of work to justify pulling all of them together in one place.*” As Avril Somlyo tells me “the novelty of this mission was summed up by a fellow Editor, James Sellers who stated: ‘It was a pretty remarkable insight in 1980 to try to combine muscle research and ‘cell motility’ into one journal. This was at a time when there was tremendous suspicion on the part of the muscle community for work being done on cellular systems. For many years, there were only a very small handful of people in our fields who regularly attended both the American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) and the Biophysical Society (BP) meetings. It wasn’t until around the late 1990s that a lot of the muscle scientists starting hitting both meetings and true cross-fertilization began to take place”.

Another proposition set forth in the mission was that the journal should “*provide accounts of some of the discussions at workshops and society meetings around the world*”. From its beginning, therefore, the Journal published not only original papers but, also short meeting reports and, importantly, abstracts of the European Muscle conferences (then known as the European Muscle Club). Recently, Marcus Schaub recalled to me that, in these early

years the Journal played also an important role (in parallel with the European Society for Muscle Research) in intensifying the contact with eastern European muscle scientists, particularly from Poland, Hungary and Russia as well as from East Germany. This is because it offered them a welcome opportunity to publish their work in a western Journal, at least as an abstract, thereby catalysing fruitful collaborations between Scientists in East and West. Over the years, therefore, the Journal contributed greatly to strengthening European muscle science. This, in turn, may well have had a beneficial effect on its success. Since its transition from Wolters Kluwer to Springer-Verlag the impact factor greatly increased, and is now already more than twice its value in 2006.

Despite his editorial commitments, Chris was always able to stay “at the leading edge” of his research field, as he was already in 1980, when he cofounded the Journal with Richard. I knew him before this, actually since his doctoral studies with Peter Caldwell, years before he developed (in 1967), with his colleague Ellis Ridgway, the then novel aequorin luminescence method for measuring transient free calcium events in cells, predating by some 10 years the development of calcium-sensitive fluorescent dyes to measure these intracellular events. Using a comparative approach, the giant Crustacean muscle fibres injected with aequorin proved ideal for showing, for the first time, the relation between the intracellular calcium ion concentration and contraction, many years ahead of similar studies in the more difficult vertebrate muscle preparations. More recently, however, his interests focussed on more conventional muscles, in particular on normal and diseased cardiac muscle and on using sophisticated biophysical and molecular genetic approaches. As stated by Avril Somlyo “This broad background in various aspects of muscle brought an important perspective to his role as Editor-in-Chief of

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JMRCM. As an Editor, his main goal was to have the JMRCM serve the muscle community, and he has stayed true to the mission for the Journal. Chris has been a pleasure to work with, and I hope he will serve as a resource as the

Journal moves forward”. Surely we all realise how much time and energy he must have devoted to the journal over all these years and for which we are all most grateful.