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Robert Trelstad

Bob Trelstad is Chairman of the Pathology Department at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Piscataway/New Brunswick, New Jersey. One of ASCB's most committed and longtime members, Trelstad is currently working to preserve the Society's history by building a comprehensive archival record of its activities. Trelstad's involvement in ASCB began in the mid-60s when he joined the Society; his role in the operation of ASCB began in the late-70s when he was asked by former ASCB Executive Secretary Nancy Bucher to serve as Secretary. At that time, ASCB membership was about 2,000 stored, Trelstad recalls, in a shoebox in Bucher's office at the Massachusetts General Hospital. After he moved to Piscataway in 1981, Trelstad was formally asked to serve as Secretary of the Society. He agreed, since ASCB was about to establish a National Office. In 1981, Trelstad was elected Society Secretary and helped establish the National Office. He credits ASCB's explosive expansion with the creation of the National Office, which helped manage the committee structures more effectively. During his tenure as Secretary and thus Chair of the Membership Committee throughout much of the 80s, Trelstad favored removing some of the barriers to membership in the growing discipline by minimizing bureaucracy. Trelstad comments that the Society's emergence as a powerful organization was driven by the growth of the discipline of cell biology during the 1980s. Born in Redding, California, Trelstad's father was a physician who had joined the Civilian Conservation Corps in the late-30s and after Pearl Harbor was drafted into the Army. While the senior Trelstad served overseas for three years during World War II, young Bob's mother moved the family back to Minnesota. After the war, the family moved to Salem, Oregon, where Trelstad grew up and later met and married his high school sweetheart, Barbara, now his wife of 33 years. Trelstad started his college education close to home at Willamette University, and moved to New York after his freshman year when a high school friend convinced him to transfer to Columbia.

At Columbia, Trelstad was assigned Nobel Laureate Polykarp Kusch as his academic advisor and did well in math and physics, but became intrigued with developmental biology and comparative anatomy in classes taught by Lester Barth and Francis Ryan. He changed his major from math and physics to pre-med. In his senior year, Trelstad took an entry-level graduate class in cell biology taught by Teru Hayashi. He found this subject stimulating and saw the first exciting new images of the cell taken with the electron microscope. After graduating Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Columbia, Trelstad entered Harvard Medical School in 1961. At Harvard, he met some of the influential early forces in the development of cell biology: Elizabeth Hay, Jean-Paul Revel, Don Fawcett, Susumo Ito, Morris Karnovsky, Ramzi Cotran, Ed Furshpan, David Potter, Steve Kuffler, Torsten Weisel, David Hubel, Peter Curran, and Arthur Solomon. Solomon was one of the founders of the ASCB and much of Trelstad's graduate education in medicine was underwritten by Barbara Trelstad's working for Solomon during those medical school years.

Trelstad worked his first summer in medical school with Elizabeth Hay and Jean-Paul Revel on early chick development and began to focus on the development of cell, matrix,

and tissue patterns in the limb, vertebral axis, and eye. After graduating from Harvard Medical School in 1966, Trelstad entered a residency program in pathology at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) under Benjamin Castleman. Cell biology was part of daily conversation among the new medical house staff that included Michael Brown and Joe Goldstein. Trelstad specialized in pathology because it appealed to his interest in cells and structures. He found diagnostic surgical pathology to be an extension of cell biology and considered the autopsy a clinical and anatomic challenge.

Trelstad was offered a position at the NIH in the U.S. Public Health Service, fulfilling his military obligation from 1967-1969. He worked with Alfred (Chris) Coulombre, a developmental biologist studying the eye. At NIH, Trelstad continued his studies of patterning in the development of the chick cornea, somites, and limb. Trelstad returned to the Mass General to study matrix morphogenesis in the laboratory of Jerome Gross. For several years he searched for new collagen types using various modifications of extraction, fractional precipitation, and denaturing chromatography. In 1972, he joined the faculty of the Department of Pathology at Harvard Medical School as an assistant professor and the staff at the Mass General in pathology.

In 1975, Trelstad moved across the street from the Mass General to the Shriners Burns Institute where he became Chief of Pathology and was promoted to Associate Professor. At the Shriners, in addition to continuing work on matrix structure, development, and wound healing, he worked with colleagues at the MGH on Mullerian inhibiting substance with Patricia Donahoe and the acute respiratory distress syndrome with Warren Zapol.

Trelstad moved to Piscataway, New Jersey, and the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (now Rutgers Medical School) in 1981. There he has focused on developing an academic pathology department with talented investigators and members of ASCB, some of whom moved from Boston, including David Birk, Masando Hayashi and Kimiko Hayashi; some from the then resident faculty including Karel Raska, Jana Raskova, Steve Shea, and Tetsuo Shimamura; and some from recruited faculty including Peter Yurchenco, Donald Winkelmann and Peter Amenta. While membership in ASCB is not a prerequisite for joining the department, the impact of cell biology is central to the department's approach to research, teaching, and clinical service.

Trelstad harbors a passion for computers and has applied this love of technology to teaching. He is the founder of Keyboard Publishing, which provides a multi-media forum for students of biology and medicine to access textbooks, quizzes, videodiscs, simulations, and other teaching experiences through networked or stand-alone computers.

The Trelstads are proud of their four sons, but, Bob notes sardonically, thank God they're out of the house. Derek, 29, has a graduate degree in architecture from Columbia and is particularly interested in historical preservation, serving as Associate Editor of Building Renovation. Graham, 27, a recent graduate of Yale's School of Environmental Studies, will pursue a career in water use management and is the new father of twin daughters. Brian, 25, who graduated from Harvard, is the environmental activist in the family and is now a program officer in Americorps, President Clinton's public service initiative. And

Jeremy, 19, is on leave of absence from Oberlin College and is working at the Mass General, intent on becoming a biologist.

The Trelstads have recently completed a getaway house in the Catskill Mountains of New York. Barbara Trelstad, who manages a \$100 million art collection as Registrar of the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers, enjoys gardening, although Trelstad claims that he does most of the digging. When not following his wife's gardening directions, Trelstad reads history. The Trelstad offspring are fourteenth generation Americans; Barbara's forebears came to America on the Mayflower. Trelstad has extended his interest in history to New Jersey, where he is currently writing a history of Piscataway, New Brunswick, and the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Trelstad hopes the present efforts to formalize an archive for the papers of the ASCB will close a chapter in the preservation of the history of the Society.