

## **A TRIBUTE TO M. STEVEN MCDOWELL 1956-2003**

When a colleague in the prime of life passes away abruptly, as Steve did last year, it is difficult for us, his surviving friends, to take stock in the life so unexpectedly ended. At any given moment in our lives, we all have many activities in which we are involved. Each activity includes many partially overlapping circles of friends and associates. As members of one of these circles, we find it fitting that all circles unite and tie together at an ending point the many threads woven by such a rich life.

Michael Steven (Steve) McDowell was born July 31, 1956, in Los Angeles, California, to Warner S. and Kathe (Bender) McDowell. He died unexpectedly on March 7, 2003, as a result of complications of a pulmonary aneurysm. In his early years, Steve was raised and educated in Los Angeles. He moved to Chicago, Illinois, in his teen years. He graduated from high school in Chicago in 1974. He continued his educational career at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, earning a B.S. in Chemistry in 1978. His graduate studies were completed at Iowa State University in Ames, where he earned his Ph.D. in Inorganic Chemistry in 1983. Steve did postdoctoral research work at the University of California-Riverside, from 1983-1985, and then moved into a teaching career in chemistry at California State University-Long Beach, and Santa Monica College, Santa Monica, California. In 1990, Steve joined the faculty in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, where he entered into a vigorous career of teaching, research, and service.

During his first decade at SDSMT, he advanced through the professional ranks from assistant to associate professor. He taught courses in general, analytical, physical, and predominately inorganic chemistry. He was known for having an open-door policy to his students and many stopped by to partake of his wisdom. Steve was heavily involved in his research, having as many as ten students, both undergraduate and graduate, working for him at a single time. A few of the projects he was involved in include Supramolecular Assemblies Containing Metal Ion Centers, Synthesis and Characterization of Novel Organocobalt(III) compounds, Synthesis and Characterization of Self-Assembling Surfactants, and Synthesis and Characterization of Metal Saccharinates. Steve and his research group often presented papers at regional and national American Chemical Society meetings, and Academy of Science meetings, in addition to publishing many journal articles.

On campus, he served a two-year term (1996-1998) as Chair of the Faculty during a fairly turbulent time for faculty governance at SDSMT. From 1998-2002, he served as Chair of the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering. He was a member and leader in many professional organizations. He served a term as secretary of the South Dakota School of Mines Chapter of Sigma Xi, and worked his way up the leadership ladder of the South Dakota Academy of Sciences, which he was serving as president at the time of his

passing. He was a member and long-time Chapter Advisor of Alpha Chi Sigma, a professional chemistry fraternity, and in July 2002 was elected to the position of District Counselor. In 1996, Steve received the Ronald T. Pflaum Award for Outstanding Chapter Advisor from Alpha Chi Sigma. He was a member of the American Chemical Society, and the Inorganic Division of the American Chemical Society, in whose journal he regularly published. He was also a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the International Union of Pure & Applied Chemistry.

The Academy has been honored by Steve's many contributions to our organization, to higher education in South Dakota, and to the field of chemistry in general. He is truly missed.

*Jaque Cranston, Dept. Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, and Andy Detwiler, Department of Atmospheric Sciences, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology*