

Matthew L Severns (1953-2010)

I am deeply saddened to announce that Matthew L. Severns, Ph.D., died on 13th April 2010 at Johns Hopkins Hospital, following a gruelling 12-hour surgery for bladder cancer. Those who knew Matt will understand when I say that he was his usual uplifting, bouncy self prior to surgery, even though he knew that the surgery would be complex. This was his 8th cancer surgery in 16 years, due to his unfortunate inheritance of the Lynch mutation. He used to research each different cancer type prior to treatment; his suggestion to his surgeon to break with tradition and treat his advanced colo-rectal cancer with radiation and chemotherapy prior to surgery to prevent seeding, led to a new treatment protocol for this cancer. I used to joke with him that Darwin would be proud.

Those of you who did not know Matt well probably had no idea that he battled so many serious health conditions. This is probably because he was so positive in his interactions with people. He was a superb teacher, breaking problems down into whatever level was understandable, without being condescending. He had a knack for disarming critics, and the intelligence to win the argument if he felt it was necessary. But his natural tendency was to make friends, not enemies - by directive of the little kid in him that would force him to have perspective.

Matt was a biomedical engineer. He was a graduate of the University of Delaware (BA magna cum laude: Physics, Chemistry, Biology), and of the University of Virginia (ME and PhD: biomedical engineering). He spent most of his career in industry, his faculty appointments at George Washington University and Johns Hopkins University (where he was an adjunct professor) notwithstanding. His various positions included stints at the Red Cross, where was Head of the Advanced Automation Research Group, Reichert Instruments, where he was Director of Engineering, and GE, where he was the Vice President for R&D of the Perinatal Life Support Solutions division. But he is known to most of us through his connection to LKC Technologies, Inc., where he served as Director of Engineering (1986-1997), and then returned as COO (2005-present). He had over 40 peer-reviewed publications, most related to visual physiology, and 11 patents. He was a long-time reviewer for the NEI Visual System Small Business Special Emphasis Panel.

Matt was a prominent member of ISCEV; a regular contributor to ISCEV symposia and a participant in several of the committees and working groups. His exceptional ability to convey the perspectives of an engineer, a manufacturer and a research scientist will be sorely missed.

Matt leaves behind a father, a sister, a wife and 3 children, ages 10, 13 and 15, and many loving friends and colleagues. Matt was 57.

Mary Johnson