

OBITUARY

Ira Herskowitz, an Editor of *Genes to Cells* dies at 56

Ira Herskowitz died on 28 April 2003 of pancreatic cancer. He graduated from the California Institute of Technology and attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for his doctorate, studying the control of gene expression in phage lambda. As a young professor at the University of Oregon he started his seminal work on yeast molecular biology. Extending the pioneering work by Yasuji Oshima, he provided molecular interpretation of the cassette theory of yeast mating type interconversion. Later at the University of California, San Francisco, he continued to make key contributions on gene regulation and control of cell cycle with the yeast system. I

think it a natural development that, in later years, he was concerned with the mammalian biology of pharmacogenetics of membrane transporters. Ira had a remarkable ability to untangle complex phenomena by clear reasoning and impressed us with his persuasive presentation. He was also an enthusiastic folk and blues singer. When I organized a biology meeting, I asked him to bring his guitar. He said that 'I will bring my instrument made in Japan', real or joke? I present below some of the witty lines he sang. I feel very sad that I cannot reproduce his attractively deep voice.

(Jun-ichi Tomizawa, 'Tomi').

'RETURN TO SENDER'

I sent a paper to *Cell*
I sent it Special D
I had visions of a cover
But it came right back to me

Ben wrote upon it—

'Return to sender'
I read with a groan
'Not enough data'
'Nothing cloned'

I tried to shorten the manuscript
Add the data that it lacked
I tried to revise it
But my paper kept coming back

Sent a version to *Science*

I sent it Federal Ex
Hoped they'd feature it prominently
But I think this paper's hexed

Dan wrote upon it—

'Return to sender'
'Not much to discuss'
'Please don't be offended'
'It's just not for us'

We isolated a dozen more mutants
Cloned and sequenced three genes too
But the paper was sent right back
Never went out for review

I sent the paper to *Nature*
I sent it DHL
I had visions of an article
But it came right back as well

John wrote upon it—

'Return to sender'
'Not of interest to me'
'Needs more colour'
'Try *JMB*'

I sent the paper to *Genes to Cells*
I sent it Priority Mail
I had visions of acceptance
Hoped I wouldn't fail

Tomi wrote upon it—

'This paper's accepted'
'It's a lovely tale'
'Data are substantial'
'Proofs are in the mail'

Our paper told a beautiful story
But it wasn't for the average Joe
Maybe some day, the masses will discover

What we already know
That this paper's a classic
I think you get my gist
If they look in *Genes to Cells*
Gonna see what they've missed

For Tomi —
with best regards —
Ja
Sept 13, 1997