

Dear Colleagues,

I write to share the sad news of the passing of Robert “Bob” Meyer, Professor Emeritus of Physics, on November 17, 2023 at the age of 80. Born on October 13, 1943 in St. Louis, MO, to Samuel B. Meyer and Gertrude (Lenz) Meyer, Bob earned his bachelor's degree in physics from Harvard University in 1965 and a doctoral degree in 1970. He remained at Harvard as a postdoctoral scholar, then as an assistant professor and an associate professor. He held visiting professorships at the Nordic Institute for Theoretical Physics (Nordita) at Chalmers University in Gothenburg, and at the École Supérieure de Physique et de Chimie Industrielle in Paris. He joined Brandeis University as an associate professor in 1978 and was promoted to a full professor in 1985.

Bob embodied Plato's allegory of the cave, having the uncanny ability to connect intriguing, complex, and inscrutable experimental observations to fascinating, idealized, and transparent theoretical concepts. His deep theoretical insight and experimental verification of ferroelectricity in chiral smectic-C liquid crystals, one example of a number of seminal contributions he made to liquid-crystal science throughout his career, spawned over 2000 patents, thousands of research papers, and competitive display devices in the marketplace today. Bob's work established the importance of controlled chemistry to produce liquid crystals with specified properties, and transformed an entire field of chemistry overnight. *Before Bob Meyer there were 50 known ferroelectric compounds; since his insight, over 50,000 ferroelectric liquid-crystal molecules have been synthesized.* Among Bob's many awards are the Joliot Curie Medal of the City of Paris (1978), Fellow of the American Physical Society (1985), Benjamin Franklin Medal in Physics (2004), American Physical Society for basic theoretical and experimental studies of liquid crystals (2005), and the George W. Gray Medal of the British Liquid Crystal Society (2007). He also received the Oliver Buckley Prize, considered the highest prize in condensed matter physics in the US.

At Brandeis, Bob was the founding director of the Brandeis Materials Research Science and Engineering Center in 2008. He articulated the philosophy of the Center, which recognizes that advances in materials science and biology have become increasingly intertwined, with progress in one field influencing the other. The Center has prospered following his retirement in 2012 by adhering to his vision.

Bob's interests extended to Ancient Roman architecture and, in later life, he enthusiastically taught courses at both Brandeis and Wellesley College. He spent many happy hours at his home in Kennebunkport, Maine, where he enjoyed time with his family, savored seafood feasts on the porch, and worked on his daylily garden. Bob was an accomplished baker, in endless pursuit of the perfect bread. On weekends, his family would wake up to the glorious smell of homemade scones, crepes, and biscotti. He was also an avid Boston sports fan and could be found on the couch cheering on (or more likely berating) the Patriots and Red Sox. Above all, the time Bob spent with his children and grandchildren brought him the greatest pride and joy.

A resident of Wellesley, Bob is survived by his wife of 43 years, Maureen V. (Nicholls) Meyer. Bob was the devoted father of Lesley Meyer Pizarra, and husband Steven, Alison C. Moppett, Samantha A. Moppett and husband Jonathan Kelley, and Marguerite A. Sharkey. He was a devoted grandfather to Jocelyn P. Kelley, Charlotte D. Kelley, Brennan R. Pizarra, and Quinn A. Pizarra. Bob was the brother of

Nancy M. Lowe of State College, PA, and the late Margaret S. Rich. He is survived by his niece Jennifer Lowe and nephews Jonathan Lowe and Michael Sherry.

All are welcome to pay their respects and celebrate Bob's life at a memorial service on Tuesday, December 19, at 11:00 am at the Glavin Chapel, located on the Babson College campus in Wellesley, MA, followed by a light lunch at Babsons' Rogers Pub. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Greater Boston Food Bank in the name of Robert B. Meyer.

May his memory be a blessing and his legacy continue to grow.

I am grateful to Seth Fraden from the Department of Physics for his contribution to this memoriam.

Sincerely,
Carol

Carol A. Fierke
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs