

Miriam (Mimi) Zolan, a world-renowned scholar and teacher, retired from the Department of Biology after 42 years as a scientist and 29 years as a professor at Indiana University. Mimi is internationally recognized for her work on the functions of DNA repair genes in meiosis, using the mushroom *Coprinus cinereus* for her studies. As a teacher, she has inspired thousands of undergraduates and graduate students in a range of courses from introductory biology to advanced molecular genetics.

Mimi grew up in Fairfield, Connecticut. Her mother was a teacher, and Mimi knew early that teaching would always be a part of her own life. Becoming a scientist was more of a surprise. Mimi entered Smith College with the intention of becoming a lawyer. However, she took a genetics course, fell in love with chromosomes, and embarked on a new path. After getting her A.B. degree in Biology (1976), she spent a year as a technician before entering graduate school at Stanford University. At Stanford, she found the perfect environment in the lab of Phil Hanawalt, a leader in the field of DNA repair, whose collaborative style of running a lab became the model for Mimi's own career. In Phil's lab, Mimi worked closely with Allen Smith, a senior research scientist, who also greatly influenced her approach to research and to mentoring others. As a third-year graduate student, Mimi made an incredibly exciting discovery of differential repair, in which different types of DNA sequences are repaired at different rates and to differing extents. Her results were published in top journals including *Cell* and *Nature*. After graduation from Stanford (Ph.D., 1983), she wanted to switch from working with cultured cells to an organism more amenable to genetic manipulation. By fluke, she was introduced to Pat Pukkila at UNC Chapel Hill, and made an instant connection. Pat's love of the mushroom *C. cinereus* to study meiosis was infectious. During her postdoc, Mimi identified radiation-sensitive mutants that provided a wealth of future projects for her own lab. Mimi chose her advisors well because Phil, Allen, and Pat have all provided advice, encouragement, and friendship throughout her entire career.

Mimi started her independent career as an Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan, Dearborn (1985-1989) but moved to Indiana University in order to make research central to her career. Upon establishing her lab, Mimi focused on understanding the defects of radiation-sensitive mutants to determine the mechanisms of DNA repair and recombination in meiosis. Throughout her career, she gained an international reputation for her beautiful and careful work on understanding meiotic chromosome behavior, linking DNA replication, chromosome pairing, synaptonemal complex formation, and recombination. Having a strong standing in the field, Mimi was chosen to organize the Gordon Research Conference on Meiosis, the top meeting in the field (2004, 2006). In addition, she was elected as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2007). During her career, she trained 10 Ph.D. students and one M.S. student. Mimi's graduate students recognize her as a wonderful and brilliant mentor, who provided a supportive environment that allowed them to grow as scientists. Mimi fondly remembers that the best times in her lab were when she would collaboratively interact with her students, research associates, and postdoctoral fellows.

When choosing to move to Indiana University, Mimi noted that it was a top research University that also valued teaching, which was a strong interest of hers. Throughout the years, she appreciated the support of Indiana University for fostering teaching. She frequently used the Center for Teaching and Learning to learn new teaching techniques to further engage students. As she developed her teaching program further, she was able to share her strategies

by collaborating with instructors from other departments and the Center for Teaching and Learning, publishing papers on teaching, giving teaching workshops, mentoring other faculty in teaching, and leading a graduate seminar, in which students were able to discuss and practice various approaches to engaging students in active learning. She won numerous teaching awards including the Biology Department Teaching Award (1990), the Senior Class Award for Teaching Excellence in Biology (1991), the Faculty Colloquium on Excellence in Teaching Award (1993), the Teaching Excellence Recognition Award (1997, 1998, 2000), and the Trustees Teaching Award (2001, 2008).

Science has always been a family affair for Mimi. She met her husband, Jeff Palmer, in her first year of graduate school and they have always been able to share the academic lifestyle and provide support to each other throughout their careers. Jeff is also a member of the Department of Biology as a Distinguished Professor. Although they worked in different research areas, their labs were side-by-side and connected both physically and, on one occasion, by collaboration between doctoral students from the two labs. Together, Mimi and Jeff have raised two lovely boys, Nick and Mike. Nick and his childhood best friend were often found doing their homework behind the freezer alcove between the two labs. Both boys enjoyed having a scientist mother who would come to their schools to set up demonstrations and lab experiments.

In retirement, Mimi will continue to make further contributions to the field of meiosis. She will finish writing some exciting manuscripts and possibly get back to the bench to do more research. I am most looking forward to Mimi's attendance at my lab's group meeting and our meiosis brainstorming sessions over lunch, because she always asks the most insightful questions. Always a teacher, Mimi also plans to tutor undergraduates in genetics. In addition, she has a strong desire to help engage undergraduates in politics and will volunteer in voter registration. She also plans to frequently visit her son who lives in Europe, further travel the world, and rediscover her kitchen at home.

Soni Lacefield  
2018