



IN MEMORIAM

Myron Bander
Professor of Physics and Astronomy, Emeritus
UC Irvine
1937 - 2012

Myron Bander, one of the very early faculty members to join the Department of Physics at the University of California, Irvine, died unexpectedly on December 19, 2012 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Though retired for several years, Myron had remained extremely active in teaching and research until the time of his death, and had just finished attending an elementary particle physics conference when he experienced a sudden, fatal heart attack. A popular theorist, known for his breadth of knowledge, friendliness and wit, he had also played a major administrative role in leading and developing both his department and the School of Physical Sciences at UCI, where he spent the last 46 years of his professional career. Among his honors, he was a recipient of an Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship and was elected a Fellow of the American Physical Society.

Myron was born in the town of Belzyce, in eastern Poland, on December 11, 1937. Shortly following the German invasion of Poland at the start of World War II, his father, a physician, moved the family further east, to what is now Ukraine, in October, 1939. It was a prescient, probably life-saving move, since a large majority of those who stayed behind perished. The family spent the remainder of the war there, part of the time in a ghetto and for many months hidden by two Polish families, before being liberated by the Soviet Army in August, 1944. They subsequently found their way to displaced persons camps in Austria and Germany before immigrating to the United States in August, 1949.

Settled in New York City, Myron embarked on a science career attending Brooklyn Tech, one of the city's special science-oriented high schools, and received his Bachelor's degree in Physics at Columbia College in 1958. He stayed on for graduate work at Columbia University, obtaining his Ph.D. in 1962, studying with Gary Feinberg. His thesis concerned muon decay into three electrons, in the very early days of speculation about possible differences between the muon and electron. This started him off on his principal field of research: quantum field theory and elementary particle physics, in particular. After one year spent as an NSF Postdoctoral Fellow at CERN, the University of Copenhagen and the University of Paris, Myron became a Research Associate at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center; he was the first Research Associate hired at SLAC. In 1966 he joined the faculty of the then one-year old Irvine campus of the University of California, where he joined Gordon Shaw in helping to build the elementary particle theory group.

Myron made substantial contributions in the field of particle theory and phenomenology. In collaboration with Dennis Silverman and Amarjit Soni in 1979, he wrote a seminal paper on CP violation in B mesons, which became a leading area of interest in particle physics for decades afterwards. Another influential work is his study with Gregory Beall and Soni on the possibility that parity conservation is restored at high energies. In addition to such classic particle physics works, he also contributed in many other areas. His publications covered a wide range, including dispersion relations, lattice gauge theories, statistical mechanics, general relativity and cosmology, with occasional forays into nuclear physics, condensed matter physics and atomic

physics. His contributions extended even into accelerator physics, having solved a problem while at SLAC on the theory of beam breakup in linear accelerators. Later in his career, he worked extensively with his very close friend from graduate school days, Hector Rubinstein, on several topics in astrophysics.

He frequently published alone with considerable originality and creativity, but also worked well in small collaborations at the cutting edge of research. Often his collaborations were international; he traveled frequently and widely, and was a welcome visitor with many theory groups and at laboratories and universities around the world. Myron worked closely, in particular, with a number of colleagues at several institutions in Israel. For many years he served on the Board of Directors of the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science.

In addition to the vital research and leadership role he played in the elementary particle theory group at UCI, Myron also served with distinction in an administrative capacity for his department and school. He was chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy for two separate terms (1978-80 and 1992-95) and served as the third Dean of the School of Physical Sciences, 1980-86. He was instrumental in the creation of the Department of Earth System Science, the only new department added to the School since its founding. He was principally responsible for generating the idea for this addition during his last year as Dean and subsequently played a major role in planning what was to become a unique and outstanding new unit, and in recruiting Ralph Cicerone as its first Chair.

As a former chair and former dean, Myron was for many years a senior statesman at UCI. At the same time, his great enthusiasm for the latest scientific discoveries, results and news, even in his later years, was a source of great inspiration to many junior colleagues, and his interest in and support for their careers helped create a stimulating and interactive research environment at UCI. He was also an early and strong advocate for cosmology and its connections to particle physics, and was influential in building programs in cosmology and astroparticle physics at UCI.

Myron was always extremely generous in his mentoring of graduate students, postdocs and junior faculty, and in his welcoming and hosting of visitors to the UCI theory group. Seminar speakers could expect probing, incisive questions from him. But visitors, as well as local friends and colleagues, also experienced many wonderful events and superb dinners hosted by Myron and his wife, Carol. These occasions would be filled with great conversation about many topics, including science and history and stories about travel. Myron was something of a polymath, well-read in history and literature, and knowledgeable about geography from his and Carol's extensive travels. His sparkling intelligence and friendship will be greatly missed by all his associates, friends and colleagues.

Jonathan Feng
Professor of Physics and Astronomy

Jonas Schultz
Professor of Physics and Astronomy

Dennis Silverman
Professor of Physics and Astronomy, Emeritus