TRIBUTE

Susumu Okubo ’58 (PhD):
A Gentle and Humble Giant

Susumu Okubo ’58 (PhD) was a towering figure in theoretical physics. But he was so gentle and humble that when you spoke with him, you would never realize just how much he knew.

I first met Susumu in 1982, when he came to pick me up at the airport when I arrived at Rochester just before accepting an appointment as assistant professor of physics. Susumu was hired at Rochester in 1962 as a research associate and became a full professor of physics in 1964. In the early 1960s, his research led to what became known as the Gell-Mann–Okubo mass formula, which provided exact predictions of known hadronic particles. This was based on mathematical symmetries which had a major impact on the development of elementary particle physics. He also made significant contributions to other areas of theoretical particle physics.

In the late 1960s, when Andrei Sakharov was formulating three fundamental requirements for understanding the baryon asymmetry of the universe, he relied on Susumu’s research, and credited Susumu in verse: From S. Okubo’s effect, at high temperature / A far coat is tailored, to fit the skewed form of the universe.

This was the giant figure waiting for me at the airport to welcome me to Rochester, even though we had never met earlier.

As colleagues for more than 30 years, Susumu and I collaborated on two papers and a book. He was kind and generous even when we were not collaborating on a project. Once, as I was working on a difficult problem, I went to Susumu’s office to explain my dilemma on a certain point. He said, “Oh, Ashok, you always ask difficult questions.” But he said he would think about it. And that’s what he did, even though it was not his problem.

The next morning, he came to my office with an answer. When I suggested we should write the result together, he said, “Oh, no, it was just a small thing.”

Susumu was a quiet man, but we would have long conversations about life. He was interested in many things. He read literature, book reviews, magazines, and would share articles with me. He and his wife, Mary, loved scuba diving. He was very good at it and took up underwater photography.

Although he retired in 1995, he never stopped coming to work and publishing papers. A couple of days before he died last July at the age of 85, he had just completed his last paper. Following a Japanese tradition, Susumu wrote a short death poem (jisei no ku). It reflected a lot of what we used to talk about.

To be or not to be? Quantum Dream of the Schrödinger Cat.

Farewell, Farewell Forever. Departure time now to the Black Hole.

Never to Return. Farewell.

ASHOK DAS

OKUBO’S EFFECT: Okubo made key contributions to theoretical particle physics.

—ASHOK DAS

Das is a professor of physics at Rochester.
TRIBUTE

Two Black Lines
Remembering Richard Leone ’62 and James Hadley ’62

We were classmates and brothers pals and co-conspirators wannabe renegades and reasonably good students

We struggled through the snow chased footballs on the Quad drank beer, laughed together and burned the midnight oil

Now two of us are only remembered by two lines of type on a sheet of white

No recollection of Dick’s serious nature and his accomplishments or Jim’s artistic talents and his biting wit

Seems a shame that two bright lights are remembered with just two black lines

—PHIL LA BORIE ’62

La Borie submitted the poem after reading about the deaths of his fellow classmates and fraternity brothers, Richard C. Leone ’62 and James W. Hadley ’62, in the September-October issue.

Donald R. Thompson ’53, August 2015
Reginald W. Havill ’54, September 2015
Marilyn Alderman Swaфф ’54E, May 2015
Brien B. Rogers ’55, July 2015
Gordon C. Branche ’56 (MA), August 2015
Mary Ann Demo ’56, ’57N, July 2015
Maria Echaniz ’56, ’58 (MA), August 2015
Ralph E. Harper ’56, September 2015
Paul Ross ’56M (Res), August 2015
George K. Ungерer ’56, September 2015
Ernest E. Etzweiler ’57E (MM), August 2015
David L. VanDermeid ’57, September 2015
Mary Ann Sedore Campbell ’59, ’63N (MS), May 2014
Lawrence T. Rollins ’59M (Res), September 2015
Ruth Moore ’60E (MA), August 2015
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James Reed ’61, ’66 (PhD), August 2015
Raymond T. Ruff ’62S (MS), September 2015
Marcia Belding Watson ’62, August 2015
Walter D. Hedgepeth ’63 (MA), September 2015
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Lloyd J. Bach ’67, September 2015
Alexander T. Cathie ’67, May 2015
Rainer E. Hecker ’67, July 2015
Ronald M. Kern ’67S, June 2015
Everett L. Larrabee ’68W (Mas), July 2015
Sandra Herskowiz ’70, March 2015
Aspasia Christ Tahou ’70, September 2015
Norma Nicholson Zabel ’70W (MA), August 2015
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Elizabeth Todd Dyring ’72W (Mas), August 2015
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Ruth Senseney Stratton ’77N, July 2015
Yadon Arad ’78, ’82M (MD), August 2015
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Bryan A. Beamant ’90 (MS), September 2015
Harlan M. Budd ’92, September 2015
William H. Scott ’92S (MBA), August 2015
Joel M. Dopp ’93M (PhD), September 2015
Helen Dowdell ’95N (MS), July 2015
Claudine Joyner DeNava ’97, August 2015
Maria Hagan ’96, September 2015
Debra Hoffman ’06 (PhD), September 2015