

MICHAEL PLISCHKE (1945-2020)



We are deeply saddened to inform you that Michael Plischke, Professor Emeritus, Department of Physics, Simon Fraser University (SFU), passed away Wednesday April 29, 2020 after an extended illness.

Michael (Mike) was born in January 1945 in Czechoslovakia; shortly after, his family moved to Würzburg, Germany. He was 9 years old when they settled in Montreal QC where he did all his schooling up to a BSc Physics from Loyola College.

He pursued graduate studies in the United States, first at Yale University, New Haven (CT) where he completed a MPhil. He then moved to Yeshiva University in New York City NY., where he completed a PhD under the supervision of Daniel Mattis, who is well known for his work on magnetism and statistical mechanics, and the author of many well-known textbooks on those subjects.

Mike graduated in 1970 at a time when there were very few openings in academia. But he hung in there, working in various short term positions from 1970 to 1976, at Yeshiva University, McGill University, University of Leuven and the University of Alberta, producing first rate work at each posting.

Mike joined SFU in January 1976 as an Assistant Professor and was quickly promoted to Associate Professor (1978) and Full Professor (1983). In his forties, he decided that

he was interested in becoming Chair of the Department of Physics and eventually served two terms; from 1988-1993 and again from 1998-2003.

He went on to serve as Dean of Science from 2003 until 2010. He was valued as an insightful and effective Chair and Dean, who promoted excellence in teaching and research. As Chair, he fostered young faculty members, sharing his NSERC grant to support a joint postdoctoral fellow, or sharing lecture notes to help with teaching. As Dean, he was a strong advocate for science, he consistently promoted quality research and teaching, and he effectively mentored new Chairs.

Mike had a successful and rewarding research career as a condensed matter theorist; he published over 100 papers, and mentored many graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. In 2006, he was named a Fellow of the American Physical Society in recognition of his “seminal work on the statistical mechanics of complex systems, including alloys, random magnets, classical fluids, aggregation, random surfaces, interface growth and deposition, and vulcanization.” He co-authored with Birger Bergersen (UBC) a well-regarded advanced textbook on Equilibrium Statistical Physics that had three editions (1988, 1994, and 2006).

In the words of his colleagues - he was an insightful man of science, an amazing theorist, a great teacher, a wonderful colleague, a dedicated administrator and a close friend. He will be missed.

Barbara Frisken, *Simon Fraser University*
Béla Joós, *University of Ottawa*