



Dr. Zoltan Schelly

April 1, 2021

Dr. Zoltan Schelly passed away on April 1, 2021 in Asheville, NC at the age of 83 due to complications from strokes. Zoltan was a dedicated educator, father, husband, neighbor, mentor and friend. He lived with his wife, Dr. Joan Schelly (d. 2018), in Arlington, Texas for 53 years.

Zoltan was born in 1938, in Budapest, Hungary. He and his family endured many hardships during World War II and the subsequent occupation of Hungary during his childhood. Despite this, he excelled in school and in sports. He was at the top of his class and was a Hungarian Junior Champion in the modern pentathlon. At the age of 17, his father, a city engineer, died unexpectedly. In 1956, during his final year of high school, he joined the Hungarian Revolution which was brutally thwarted by the Soviet Union. He was forced to leave his mother, Klara Schelly, and younger sister, Agnes Fischer, in Budapest. His mother, a concert pianist, sold her piano to fund his escape to Austria. He was smuggled through the Hungarian countryside to the Austrian border on Christmas Eve.

Zoltan spent 15 months in refugee camps in Vienna before completing high school in Innsbruck. He then began scientific studies on a United Nations scholarship at the Vienna University of Technology in 1958. He earned a B.S. in Engineering Chemistry from the Vienna University of Technology in 1962 and a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry in 1967. He became a passionate scientist

and often said, "I chose physical chemistry for its fundamental natures: the combination of mathematics, physics and chemistry and the possibility of doing both experimental and theoretical research." His dissertation was about the 'elucidation of the mechanism of diazotization in solvent mixtures', with Prof. H. Schmid. He then accepted a research position at Chemie Linz, in Linz, Austria.

He immigrated to the United States with his first wife, Dr. Jur. Christine Kamelreiter, on a newly established scientist quota in 1968. He accepted a postdoctoral position working with Prof. W.W. Brandt on mass spectrometric studies of the diffusion of noble gases' in the Laboratory of Surface Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. His eldest daughter, Johanna Schelly, was born in Milwaukee the same year. He then joined Prof. E.M. Eyring's group at the University of Utah to study 'fast reactions by relaxation methods'. His second daughter, Barbara Schelly, was born in Salt Lake City in 1970. Zoltan accepted a position as an assistant professor at the University of Georgia in Athens later that year. He met his second wife, Dr. Joan DuBose Schelly, at the University of Georgia in 1974. Dr. Z. Schelly was an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow with L. De Maeyer and Nobel Laureate M. Eigen in the Max-Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Göttingen, Germany in 1974, where he worked on the development of the 'laser temperature-jump method'. He joined the faculty at UT Arlington in 1977 as an associate professor and became a full professor in 1982.

His youngest daughter, Andrea Schelly, was born in Arlington, Texas in 1979. Dr. Schelly served as the department acting chair from 1990-91 and as director of the department's Center for Colloidal and Interfacial Dynamics from 1982 onward. Zoltan taught undergraduate courses including General Chemistry and Physical Chemistry and graduate classes including Physical Chemistry, Chemical Kinetics, Chemical Reaction Dynamics, Statistical Thermodynamics, Principles of Laser Spectroscopy and Colloid and Surface

Chemistry.

He was a visiting professor at the National Defense Academy in Yokosuka, Japan in 1991 and at the Technical University of Budapest, Hungary in 1999. His research included experimental and theoretical studies of 'fast rate processes in systems close to and far from thermodynamic equilibrium'. Another of his primary interests was the 'relaxation of self-organized colloidal systems and oscillating chaotic reactions induced by perturbation via a high-voltage electric or high-intensity laser pulse'. 'Transient electrooptic studies of synthetic liposomes' by Dr. Schelly and his students led to their discovery of the only current method for the 'production of sub-nanometer size cluster precursors to semiconductor quantum dots in solution'. He often said, "Find something you love to do and do it. Scientific research and teaching are my hobbies."

Among the most memorable events of his career at UT Arlington were the implementation of the department's Ph.D. program and the construction of the Chemistry Research & Physics Building. He was awarded numerous honors during the course of his career. He authored over 110 publications, gave 95 invited lectures and seminars and presented more than 80 papers at national and international conferences and symposia. He made many important contributions to areas ranging from 'colloidal chemistry, ultrafast reactions to relaxation kinetics'. He was one of the finest physical chemists in the world. He considered many of his colleagues and students to be his extended family. He mentored dozens of students during his tenure at UTA. He retired in 2008 and became the care-giver for his wife, Joan, when she developed multiple myeloma.

Zoltan, known as 'Z' to his friends and neighbors, was totally unique. He was brilliant, kind, funny, spirited and thoughtful. His loves in life were his family,

friends, soccer, classical music and fried catfish. Zoltan had an incredible intellect - he spoke 4 languages fluently and often recited poetry in Russian or philosophy in German. He relished discussing scientific developments or politics with friends while puffing on a cigarette. Z enjoyed engaging with people of all walks of life: neighbors, construction workers, store clerks or fellow scientists. He was passionate and precise about everything he did. His passing is truly a loss to humanity. We will miss our Dad, Apu, Grandpa and his wisdom for the rest of our days. We wish him eternal love and peace.

He is survived by his:

Daughters, Johanna Schelly. Barbara Schelly and Andrea Schelly; Son-in-law, Peter Dorsey; Granddaughters, Lorena Schelly and Madeleine Dorsey.

Zoltan Schelly will be buried at Calvary Episcopal Church in Fletcher, North Carolina with his wife on April 16, 2021 at 3PM. A memorial service for family, friends, neighbors and students will be held in Arlington, Texas in August, 2021; further information to follow.

Highlands Cremation and Funeral Care of Arden, North Carolina, is serving the family, and condolences may be sent to them at <https://www.highlandscremationandfuneralcare.com>

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to:

Doctors Without Borders

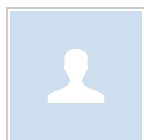
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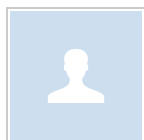
“ To this day, I regard Dr. Schelly as the most brilliant mind I have ever had the privilege of learning from as a student. I still remember visiting his office during office hours and seeing multiple Chess boards, used to actively play games with, around the world. His understanding of colloidal chemistry and physics was something that I am certain Dr. Hawking and Dr. Schrodinger would be envious of. RIP Dr. Schelly.

Charles Moradi - December 16, 2024 at 10:03 PM



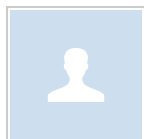
“ Dr. Zoltan Schelly

October 09, 2023 at 01:52 AM



“ Dr. Zoltan Schelly

October 08, 2023 at 10:49 PM



“ Dr. Zoltan Schelly

October 24, 2022 at 11:11 PM



“ I always enjoyed my conversations with Z. They were unlike any others and he always did it his way and took the world by storm. One of the few adults I know that had a season pass to Six Flags before he had a child. I will miss his wit and sense of humor.

Mike Norgaard - November 03, 2021 at 12:51 PM

“My father had an extremely difficult childhood; he grew up during wars and around occupying armies. He was forced to learn new languages and to navigate a landscape filled with obstacles. Despite this, he was able to live a fulfilling, meaningful life. His achievements and contributions in his field were numerous. But perhaps more importantly, he educated hundreds of future chemists, doctors and teachers.

My Dad was many things – brilliant, charming, mischievous and wise. But above all else, he was a scientist. He felt his purpose in life was to observe and discover new things about the universe around him and to help others understand those things. I could ask him any question and he had an answer. He did exactly what he loved to do and everything he could do for the betterment of the world. His back-up dream profession was: film director...but I guess there weren't many opportunities for budding young directors in post-revolutionary Hungary.

My Dad loved people. He loved talking to people of all types and he really loved talking to people while smoking a cigarette. He rejoiced in the small pleasures in life: He loved salami and stinky cheese, fried catfish, apple strudel and dark chocolate. He loved to watch, play or talk about soccer. He loved to walk around the neighborhood giving people advice about their home improvement projects. He built incredible play-houses and drove way too fast. He stood up for what he believed in and presented a logical explanation of his beliefs.

I received many touching and hilarious stories about my Dad from his friends all over the world in the last 2 weeks. The common theme in all of those stories is that he was a full of good advice. The advice ranged from – “don't immigrate to New Guinea until you finish high school” to how to haggle for a good price on a used car in Texas. He taught me to try to be a citizen of the world and to think beyond our suburban neighborhood in Texas. I will miss his guidance and I know others will too.

Many years ago, he jokingly told me that he didn't care what happened to his remains when he died and that I should – "just scatter his ashes in the creek behind the house" – in Arlington. Of course, he always planned to end up here in Asheville with my Mom. I find it comforting to think of them reunited in the clouds above the mountains arguing about where to go for dinner.

He was an extraordinary person who forged his own path in life. We are lucky to have known him.

Andrea Schelly - May 27, 2021 at 09:37 AM

DC

“ Dr. Schelly was a very special part of our Chemistry & Biochemistry Department at UT Arlington. From the beginning, he insisted on being called "Z" and not Dr. Schelly. He never wanted a fuss over himself and wanted to be real among us. He was always happy, complimentary, and had a twinkle in his eye when he would stop by the Department Office, or come to a Department Function. After he retired, my co-worker, Jill, and I met him a few times, at the Tin Cup -one of his favorite places. It was always good to see him and catch up on news, and see how he was doing. I will really miss him.

Debbie Cooke - April 16, 2021 at 05:39 PM

KJ

“ Z was an amazing person. As a young assistant professor who joined the department more than 10 years ago, I was quite nervous. I found Z to be very kind, humble and welcoming. As a kineticist, one of the items that I purchased for my lab was a stopped-flow. He invited me into his lab and showed me his hand build stopped-flow. LOL. He opened his lab to me and said that I could take anything that I found useful. Our offices were divided by a wall and it was common for him to wish me a kind morning. He will be missed.

Kayunta Johnson-Winters - April 16, 2021 at 01:45 PM

RD

“ Zoltan was an internationally respected scientist, a kind person, and a very easy individual to talk to. I will miss his contagious smile, as well as many long conversations I had with him on topics ranging from politics to chemistry.

Rasika Dias

Rasika Dias - April 16, 2021 at 01:13 PM

UD

“ UTA Chemistry and Biochemistry Department purchased the Ocean Breeze Spray for the family of Dr. Zoltan Schelly.



UTA Chemistry and Biochemistry Department - April 16, 2021 at 12:15 PM

JH

“ 24 files added to the album Memories Album



Jill Howard - April 15, 2021 at 01:37 PM

DZ

*Mi fiatalon találkoztunk
De mindkettőnknek örökkön szép emlék
Fájó szívvel most értesültem haláláról
Részvétem gyászoló családnak*

dr.Szüts Zsuzsa - August 11, 2021 at 07:18 PM

JH

“ *What a funny, personable, charismatic man! My coworker and I looked forward to visiting with Dr. Schelly when he came in to the Chemistry office. He always put a smile on our faces. We will miss his charming personality and his visits.*



Jill Howard - April 12, 2021 at 09:35 AM

DA

“ *Zoltan was one of my two "Hungarian connections", the other being Janos Fendler. What unique characters they were, in the best sense of the word. Zoltan was calm, steady, always helpful, and had that little twinkle in his eye that let you know he not only had a sense of subtle humor but also deep insights if you cared to ask. The department here, always felt a bit of empty when he had to leave. My wife, Linda, and I will miss him greatly. We'll always fondly remember "Z".*

Daniel W. (Dan) Armstrong

Daniel W. Armstrong - April 11, 2021 at 05:47 PM

GR

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Greg - April 10, 2021 at 06:39 PM

VV

“ *Victor and I treasure our memories of both Joan and Zoltan Schelly. Zoltan was so smart, funny, and welcoming, and a real inspiration. He loved his students. We last saw them both at the airport in Greenville but remember many spirited conversations around a table laden with Joan's fabulous cooking and enlivened by Zoltan's conversation. Life has been so good to us, to have given us such people.*

Victor & Toni Vitanza - April 08, 2021 at 11:32 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Highlands Cremation and Funeral Care - April 07, 2021 at 05:01 PM

JL

I love this photo of Zoltan. He was the model of calm and logic.

Jennifer Stephens Lyon - April 08, 2021 at 08:09 PM

SD

*I am so glad that my journey through this life intersected with this wonderful man's path. Always Helpful and always smiling. Even a first time acquaintance would see the twinkle in his eyes and be comforted. As a first time Department chair, and that brought in from the outside, he gave me a lot of advice and help in understanding what to do. I do not recall a single instance when he was rude and intolerant to anyone. What a lesson to the rest of us!
Wherever you are, I know you have that twinkle in your eyes, Z!*

Sandy Dasgupta - April 16, 2021 at 12:59 PM

ST

Zoltan was always friendly and kind to me when I saw him on or off-campus at UT-Arlington. Recently, I learned that he spent some time in Japan as a visiting professor. He gave me his Japanese memorabilia (tour guide booklets, etc.) when he left UTA. I always wondered how he got those things. I wish I had a chance to ask him more - I will miss him greatly.

Seiichiro Tanizaki - April 16, 2021 at 04:16 PM