

## ATVB Named Lecture Reviews—Insight Into Author



### ATVB Named Lecture Reviews—Sol Sherry Distinguished Lecture

**Insight Into the Author: James H. Morrissey, PhD,**  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

#### **Why did you choose the profession of scientific investigation?**

I've always wanted to be a scientist, ever since I was a little child. Science fascinates me, and I couldn't imagine doing anything different.

#### **Who have been your role model(s) in your scientific and professional life?**

I've had lots of good and bad examples of how to behave as a scientist, and I've learned a great deal from all of them!

#### **What have been important influences on your professional life?**

My wife, Genevieve, has given me the best guidance and grounding in my life. (We were high school sweethearts, so we've been together all our adult lives.) She's helped me focus on my work while also becoming a more complete human being.

#### **What are your scientific inspirations?**

I became fascinated with biology when I was in high school. Biological systems are both incredibly complicated but also remarkably self-regulating, and it seemed to me that we understood very little of the mechanisms that made biological systems work. This made biology mysterious and exciting. I like focusing on hard problems, and I try to work on areas that aren't the obvious next steps to take.

#### **How have mentors contributed to your professional development?**

Running a research lab is essentially running a small business, and you really have to spend a lot of time and energy supervising others. Scientists get no training for this, however! My best mentors have provided great examples of how to treat other people with kindness, dignity, and respect, while also being effective managers. Fletcher Taylor and Bill Thurman (formerly of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation) stand out in my memory.

#### **If you knew then what you know now, would you do anything different?**

I haven't had a lot of regrets in my life. But I do wish I had learned to speak a foreign language well when I was young.

#### **What wisdom do you impart on new investigators?**

If you do get a position as a head of a laboratory, be sure to keep working in the lab for several years. At first, you will have the best hands of anyone in your lab, and the people you hire will need a lot of attention and help. Avoid the pressures that take you away from the lab bench for the first 5 years at least.

#### **If you were not a scientist, which profession would you pick?**

Computers, definitely.

#### **Which direction do you envisage your science taking?**

In recent years, I've found myself collaborating more and more intensely with others, especially with scientists who don't work in my field but whose expertise is crucial to tackling a problem we are addressing. This has been highly rewarding to all concerned, and I see myself engaging in more extensive collaborations of this nature in the future.

#### **What are your nonscientific activities?**

Reading (especially, nineteenth-century literature), traveling, and riding my tandem bike with my wife.

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**What sports do you follow?**

I have a passion for minor-league baseball. I try to attend a game whenever I visit a town that has minor league ball.

**What are your favorite books, movies, music (pick one or all)?**

One of my favorite books is also one of my favorite movies: *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

**What are your favorite foods and are they heart healthy?**

Well, that would be bacon. It isn't heart healthy, so I only eat it on special occasions.

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