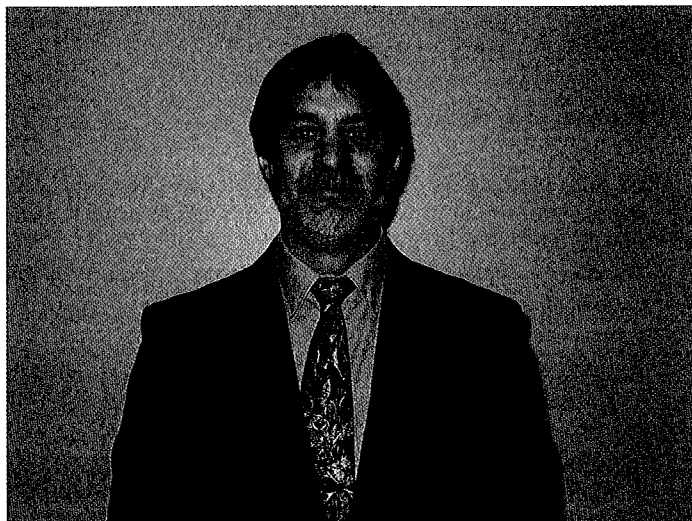


PRESIDENT OF THE TENNESSEE ACADEMY OF SCIENCE FOR 2005



Stephen Wright

It was a cold spring day about 20 years ago and I was petrified. I was to give my first oral presentation at a scientific meeting. What if I forgot what I wanted to say? Would the audience be forgiving to a graduate student? (I had been to meetings when some in the audience seemed to be out for the speaker's blood!) Would I be able to answer questions? When my 15 minutes were up, needless to say I was more than relieved and glad it was over. Surprisingly though, I had enjoyed the experience. The audience was kind and I was able to answer most of the questions. So my first exposure to a state Academy of Science meeting was wonderful and I knew this was an organization I wanted to be part of. While that first meeting occurred in North Dakota, my experience with the Tennessee Academy of Science (TAS) has been even more rewarding. Now as President for 2005, I hope others—teachers, researchers, and students—will take advantage of the opportunities the TAS has to offer. Chances are you, too, will have enjoyable experiences.

Permit me to introduce myself and provide a short biography in the Academy tradition for new presidents. My father was a career Navy man; as such, every 2–3 years I had a new home. I received a BA from Northwestern College, Wisconsin, and BS from the University of North Dakota. One of the two best things to happen to me in North Dakota was Shelly, my wife (her family agreed to our marriage even though I was not Norwegian, the first ever in their family). I earned my MS and PhD in microbiology from the medical school in Grand Forks, North Dakota. My family, including the second best thing from North Dakota,

our daughter Rachel, moved to Memphis where I had a post-doctoral fellowship at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. My post-doc involved investigation into the epidemiology of influenza. This work took me to China in search of reassortant viruses among avians, swine and humans. When I applied for a position at Middle Tennessee State University I was not aware that, finally, I really would be coming home. The Wright family had settled in Murfreesboro several hundred years ago!

I am a professor and Assistant Chair in the biology department at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). My teaching responsibilities include Honors Microbiology and Virology and I developed a new course in Biotechnology. I maintain membership in the American Society for Microbiology, American Society for Virology, and the National Environmental Health Association. I also am a member of Project Kaleidoscope, an organization of faculty from colleges and universities dedicated to promoting science education. My greatest honor was to receive the MTSU Outstanding Teacher Award. I have been nominated for a national CASE award (Council for Advancement and Support of Education).

I believe one of the best ways to "learn science" is by being directly involved in "doing science" through hands-on investigation. My current research, with funding from the National Science Foundation, is a collaborative project directed to developing a novel biosensor. In addition, our laboratory is investigating the epidemiology of Lyme disease and Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI) in Tennessee. This project, involving collaborators from the TAS, is evaluating ticks and avian blood samples for the presence of *Borrelia* spirochetes. Another on-going project involves screening ticks for evidence of genetic sequences characteristic of a novel human enterovirus responsible for aseptic meningitis we found several years ago. Through all these and other research endeavors, students I have been fortunate to work with have made presentations at TAS meetings (18 to date). I have worked with the Academy as Chair of the Health/Medical Sciences and Microbiology sections, Executive Committee Member-at-Large, and Local Arrangements Committee. The Academy has always provided and will continue to provide an excellent forum for science.

I am most honored and at the same time humbled to serve as TAS President. Our Academy has the laudable goals of supporting science education in the state as well as providing an opportunity for sharing research and forging research collaborations. The success of this organization hinges on the hard work and selfless dedication of its members. In particular the Executive Committee and other committee members provide a solid foundation for accomplishing the Academy's mission. I look forward to serving the TAS this next year and encourage all of you to continue your support.