

OBITUARY

Michael James Smirle (1954-2014)GARY JUDD¹

Dr. Michael J. Smirle passed away on July 27, 2014, at his home in Summerland, British Columbia (B.C.), while working in what he affectionately referred to as his Mother's garden. Born in Abbotsford, B.C., on June 18, 1954, Mike grew up on the family farm in the nearby village of Bradner. He was the only child of Jim and Joan Smirle.

While growing up, he excelled at piano, academics and basketball. After graduating top all-round student from Abbotsford Senior Secondary in 1972, Mike began his academic career in the faculty of music at the University of British Columbia (UBC). When his father passed away in January, 1974, Mike took the year to travel extensively with his mother. He returned to UBC in the fall of 1974, this time enrolled in the Faculty of Science.

It was at UBC, on October 5, 1974, that Mike met Mary-Anne, his wife to be, and they began their journey in life together. He graduated in 1979, with a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry, after which he returned to his daffodil farm in Bradner, and worked part time as a lumber grader in the local mill.

Tiring of shift work, Mike returned to university, this time at Simon Fraser University (SFU), where he pursued a Masters in Pest Management. While studying under Dr. Mark Winston, Mike combined an interest in biochemistry with a love for honey bees, which he had cultivated as a child on the family farm. His Master's Thesis "Development of a Sensitive Bioassay for Evaluating Sub-lethal Pesticide Effects on the Honey Bee" was followed by doctoral studies, also at SFU, on the "Insecticide Resistance Mechanisms in the Honey Bee". His doctoral studies earned him a prestigious J.H. Comstock Award from the Pacific Branch of the Entomological Society of America.

Upon completion of his Ph.D. in 1989, Mike worked as a sessional instructor at SFU, while undertaking a post-doctoral research fellowship at UBC with Dr. Murray Isman.

Mike's post-doctoral research focused on the metabolism of secondary plant compounds in phytophagous insects. He examined the mode of action of natural-product insecticides, especially neem oil and other allelochemicals.

While working two years in Isman's laboratory, Mike published three scientific papers and a significant book chapter on Allomones in *Insect-Plant Interactions*. More importantly, he also became close friends with Dr. Tom Lowery, with whom he collaborated for the rest of his career.

On the February 1, 1990, work brought Mike and the family, which now included sons James and Jeffery, to their home in Summerland, B.C. Mike worked at the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre (PARC) as a respected and valued research scientist until his passing. Working at PARC was like coming home, as Mike shared his career with no less than seven Masters in Pest Management graduates from SFU, as well as Tom Lowery from UBC. During his 24-plus years at PARC, Mike led a successful research team that focused on insect toxicology and determined the biochemical mechanisms of insecticide resistance—knowledge essential for developing strategies to manage resistant pest populations. With his capable technician Cheryl Zurowski always in support, he contributed to the development of pest management systems for orchard and grape crops, as well as to our understanding of the environmental fate of new insecticides. His collaboration on the Canadian International Development Agency Hebei Dry-Land Farming Project led to his becoming an Adjunct Professor at the University of Beijing, China.

Mike published 34 papers in peer-reviewed journals, two book chapters and 58 miscellaneous technical articles throughout his career. At PARC, he served as Head of the Environmental Studies Section for a number of years, eventually becoming the Test Site

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Manager for the Minor Use Pesticide Program at Summerland. He was a longtime member of the Entomological Societies of Canada (ESC) and British Columbia (ESBC). He served as an Associate Editor to the ESC (2006–2014) and was on the Editorial Board of Biopesticides International (2004–2104). He was the President of the ESBC at the time of his passing.

Outside of work, Mike's greatest joy was spending time with his boys and their friends. He loved every moment spent on the sidelines of local soccer pitches and track and field venues, attending his sons' high school plays, or, most especially, cheering on James and Jeff at the hockey rink—watching them thrive and

grow into the incredible young men they are today. Mike's lifelong love of music allowed him to share his talents as a regular organist at Holy Child Parish, and singing with the Mosaic Vocal Ensemble was a favorite pastime during his years in Summerland.

It always comes as a shock when the entomological community loses one of its valued scientists. This tragedy is compounded when that scientist has also been a great human being and a close friend for over 30 years.

Mike was all of these things.

He will be dearly missed by everyone fortunate enough to have known him.