

Award

2010 Service Award for Joel Schiff

It is my pleasure to present Joel Schiff, founding editor of *Meteorite* magazine, as the recipient of the Meteoritical Society's Service Award for 2010. Joel created *Meteorite* about 14 years ago and, with the help of his wife Christine and son Aaron, edited and published the magazine for 10 years. The magazine is unique in our field as it occupies an important niche linking amateurs, dealers, collectors, and professional meteorite researchers.

Joel is a distinguished mathematician at the University of Auckland. After receiving his Ph.D. at UCLA, and after year of teaching, he took up his present position in New Zealand. His research concerns complex analysis, potential theory, arithmetic Fourier transform, and he is the author of numerous research papers and three books. He retired a few years ago.

It was after publishing one of his books and finding time on his hands that Joel turned to his meteorite hobby and decided to create the magazine. With his wife handling business affairs and his son taking care of graphic design, he played the traditional role of an editor, soliciting papers and nurturing them through the editorial process. He says that a typical paper requires a dozen communications with the authors and there are about a dozen papers in an issue. Joel has an old-guard editor's taste for language, encouraging his authors to focus on style as well as content, and relishing a paper he considers well-written. He soon solicited help from Richard Norton, Roy Gallant, Russ Kempton, and Phil Bagnall, who contributed many articles. Until his death last year, Richard regularly contributed the two-page Centerpiece. Sally Sutton served as translator (Joel boasts that she knows three foreign languages, French, German, and Italian). He also appointed two scientific advisors, Alan Rubin of UCLA and Kathy Campbell of Auckland University.

Joel combines his love of language with humor and passion. He waxes lyrical about especially eloquent articles in the magazine, and in a book review he observed that it was appropriate that there is a meteorite called Grady, because Monica Grady compiled the British Museum's *Catalog of Meteorites*. But Joel has true concern for his meteorite colleagues,



Joel Schiff.

warning readers of Richard Norton's *Field Guide to Meteors and Meteorites* that meteorites, like cigarettes, "are addictive." Joel retains a special place in his heart for Brian Mason, a New Zealander whom he sees as playing a critical role in meteorite studies. When in 2000 Joel and Christine used their backyard telescope to discover an asteroid, they named it after Brian (12926 Brianmason). For many years the magazine has granted the Brian Mason award to a student attending the Meteoritical Society meeting in return for an article. In this way, he finds interesting material for the magazine while supporting students and nurturing communication skills.

There is no doubt that the magazine has been very successful. It ably straddles the divide between amateurs, collectors, dealers, and meteorite researchers. There is a regular cadre of advertisers, mostly dealers, who provide half the income for the magazine. Subscribers provide the rest, of whom about half are meteorite researchers. The fields of meteorite studies and archeology share a vexed relationship between dealers and researchers. There can be antagonism one moment and synergy the next. It has never been clear to me whether Joel is unaware of these tensions, or whether he just rises above them, and in doing so

smashes down the barriers in a wonderful display of passion for the subject. I think it is the blend of friendliness toward the society yet independence from it that makes Joel's magazine so effective.

The magazine serves the community well as an education and outreach mechanism. Education looms as large as research in the Meteoritical society's mission statement, and so the magazine furthers the society's goals. While *Meteorite* certainly summarizes research, it is a font of fundamental information for those who can only spend their spare time on these objects.

The Meteoritical Society is presenting its Service Award to Joel Schiff for giving us *Meteorite* magazine,

but maybe we should really be giving him this award for showing these various communities not just how to live together but how to learn from and respect each other, and how to showcase our infatuation for a broad audience. What a contribution from the Auckland mathematician: a magazine we love to read, synergy between meteorite enthusiasts of all persuasions, and a voice that takes our passion to the world.

Derek Sears

Arkansas Center for Space and Planetary Science
and Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
University of Arkansas
