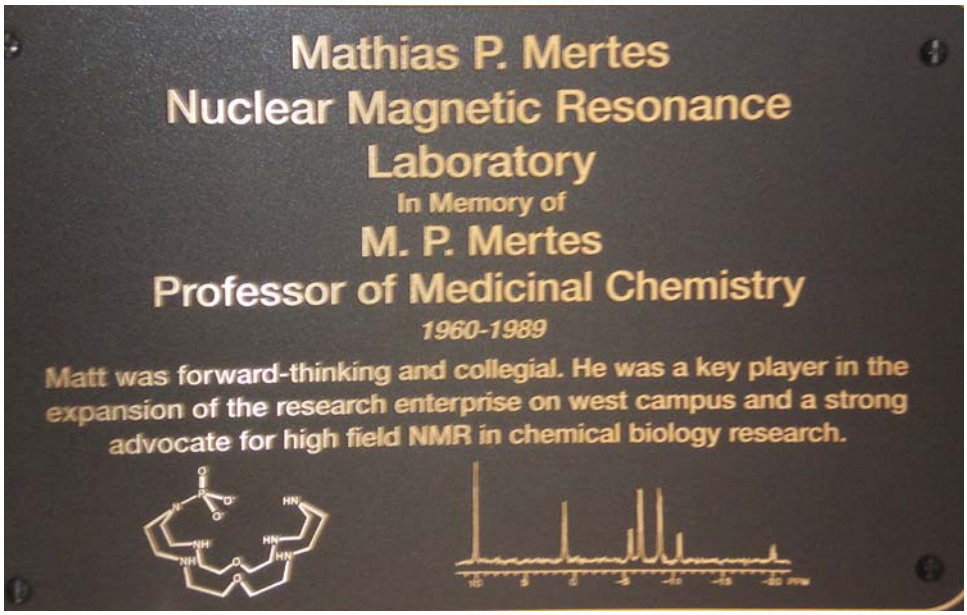
The Mathias P. Mertes 75th Birthday Symposium and Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Laboratory Dedication

October 19, 2007

Dedication Remarks by University Chancellor Robert E. Hemenway

- Three years ago, almost to the day, we met to dedicate this Structural Biology Center and its 800-megahertz nuclear magnetic resonance instrument.
- Since then, the MRB was built next door, and an additional wing of the SBC is now under construction.
- KU's West Campus is being transformed into a major hub of research. The vision we have is ambitious. Soon – as funding becomes available from federal, state, and private sources – additional research space will change the landscape even more. The impact on cancer research and other work will be tremendous.
- Groundbreakings and building dedications are "fun" ceremonies. Life sciences research is work – and maybe a little fun – for the men and women who submit grant proposals, staff the labs, conduct the experiments, and supervise graduate students.
- We must always remember that buildings and equipment are only the tools of life science research. The research itself is driven and sustained by our investment in the best people – people such as the late Matt Mertes.
- Matt came to KU in 1960, joining Ed Smissman in establishing the Department of Medicinal Chemistry we know today. Prior to his death in 1989, Matt was instrumental, along with such colleagues as Tak Higuchi, Ron Borchardt, and Eli Michaelis, in laying the foundation for the West Campus expansion and KU's leadership in high-field NMR research.
- You've just come from a symposium in honor of Matt, who would have turned 75 this year. Many of you also attended the Mertes Memorial Lecture yesterday.
- I did not have the privilege of knowing Matt Mertes, as many of you did personally. He died – too young – before I came to KU. Present today are many of his colleagues, and several students who have gone on to distinguished careers in medicinal chemistry.
- Also present is Distinguished Professor Kristin Bowman-James, who was married to Matt at the time of his death.
- As we meet today to dedicate the "Matt Mertes NMR Laboratory," it's appropriate that the facility itself is circular and the instrument itself is magnetic.
- It's been said that each class of graduates is like a new growth ring on a tree. The students who worked with Matt are also like ripples on a pond – extending his life outward in their careers and their own search for knowledge. And we are a circle of his friends, gathered to remember and continue Matt's legacy at KU.
- Magnetism can involve the study of proteins, but it's also a personal quality. Matt had that quality, drawing students and colleagues into a vision of what KU could become in 10 or 20 years in the emerging field of medicinal chemistry.

- That vision is taking shape all around us – in steel, and glass, and brick. We are here to see it happen. Matt is not.
- If he were, no doubt he would feel some pride, remembering that it all started some 20 years ago with a 300-megahertz NMR acquired through his persistence and his energy.
- In recognition of his influence on generations of researchers, in appreciation of his role in the field of medicinal chemistry, and with gratitude for his vision of life science research at KU, I'm pleased to formally dedicate the "Matthias P. Mertes Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Laboratory."



Speakers at the Mertes 75th Birthday Symposium (from left to right): Binghe Wang, Chris Bigge, Kristin Bowman-James, Christie Brouillette, Pat Hanna (photo courtesy of Prof. G. L. Grunewald).

Chancellor Robert E. Hemenway and Kristin Bowman-James at the dedication of the Mathias P. Mertes Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Laboratory in the Structural Biology Center at the University of Kansas (photo courtesy of Prof. R. P. Hanzlik).

Kristin Bowman-James unveils the plaque dedicating the 800-MHz nuclear magnetic resonance instrument laboratory as the Mathias P. Mertes Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Laboratory (photos courtesy of Prof. G. L. Grunewald).