

Tribute to Harold Rusch MD

*McArdle Symposium on Cancer Biology
October 2008*

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I am here to offer a tribute to Harold Rusch, the first Director of McArdle. Born a century ago, at age 32 he became the first Director of the McArdle Laboratory. He served as Director until 1972 when he became the founding Director of the Clinical Cancer Center, hiring Paul Carbone. Harold got it all started.

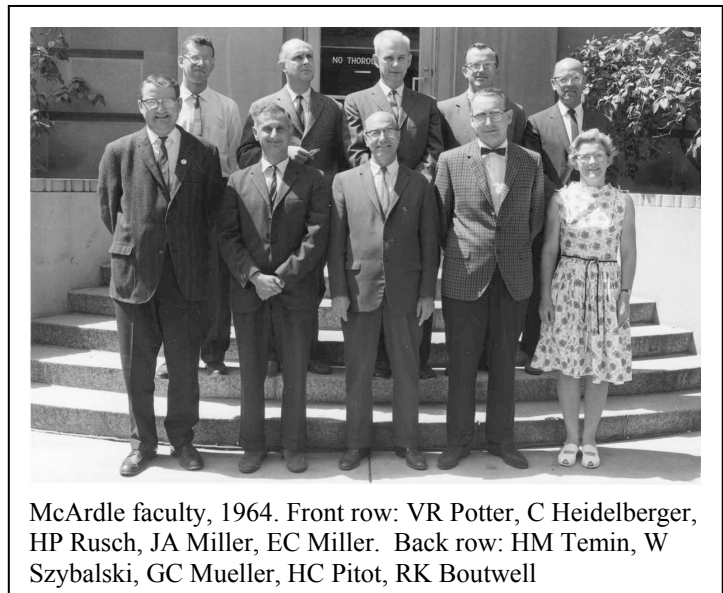
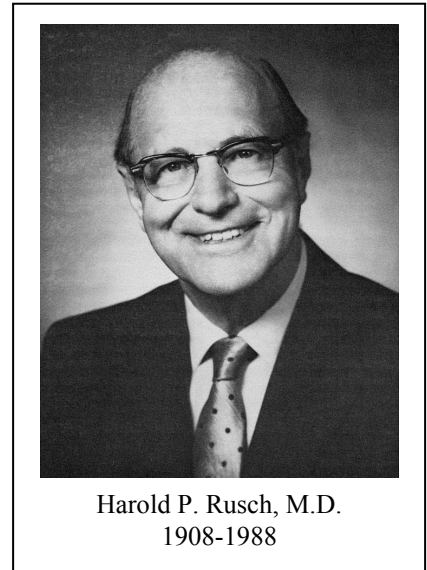
But my tribute goes beyond Harold the Builder.

I speak of **Life in McArdle and Wisconsin** as lived by Harold Rusch.

Harold personally hired the first group of faculty, seen here in 1964 when I was recruited.

Harold has described the criteria by which he chose these faculty and then fostered their development:

- **Creativity** is of prime importance; pedestrian research never opens new avenues
- **Enthusiasm** is also very important, often but not always associated with creativity
- Once hired, it is important that one's research be conducted **in complete freedom**.



Rusch's faculty have become pioneers, and we who follow honor them in McArdle Symposia—Waclaw Szybalski in 1995, this year Roz Boutwell and Gerry Mueller, and next year Howard Temin. Each year, the McArdle Symposium on Cancer will explore a contemporary theme for which seeds were planted by Harold Rusch's faculty.

Harold Rusch also had a research career. Becoming allergic to mice, he chose to study the cell cycle with a syncytial microorganism, *Physarum*. Kay Babcock in our audience was a member of the Rusch group and could observe how the microbial genetics of my group interacted over several decades with the physiology of Harold's. In Harold's later years, we found that our opposite research trajectories, crossing in *Physarum*, created a bond. He enjoyed the fact that my laboratory could transfer the approaches of microbial molecular genetics to the study of cancer in mice, while he had been obliged to go in the opposite direction.

Freedom and dialog – these made the McArdle he had created! After retirement, Rusch summarized his efforts in establishing these two cancer centers in a personal memoir: “**Something Attempted, Something Done**”. This book is remarkable reading: you can learn how a soft-spoken but decisive **citizen** of the university and of Wisconsin could build a lasting edifice to cancer research and care, “**brick by brick**”. But it is the title of this book that takes me to the final point I want to make this evening.

Where in Harold's life did this title come from?

This title comes from a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, perhaps well known to many of you, “The Village Blacksmith”.

It starts “Under a spreading Chestnut tree the village smithy stands...” and then ends with, “Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing,

onward through life he goes, each morning sees some task begun, each evening sees it close, something attempted, something done.” That was Harold's view of his life. Yes, his life was filled with good work. But it rested on a deep enjoyment of Wisconsin.

Growth and Differentiation in *Physarum polycephalum*

Edited by
W. F. Dove and H. P. Rusch

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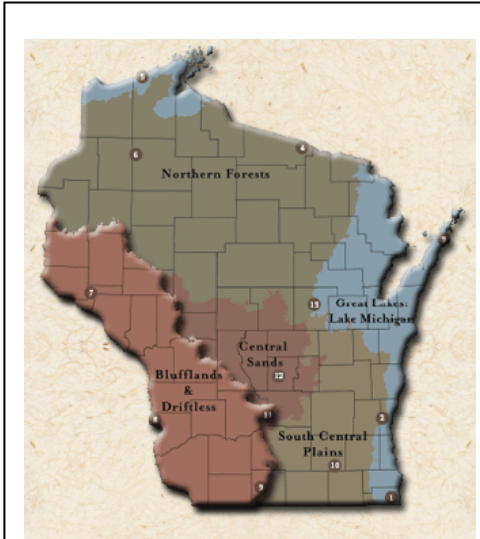
SOMETHING ATTEMPTED SOMETHING DONE

*A Personal History of Cancer Research
at the University of Wisconsin, 1934–1979*

by **HAROLD P. RUSCH, M.D.**

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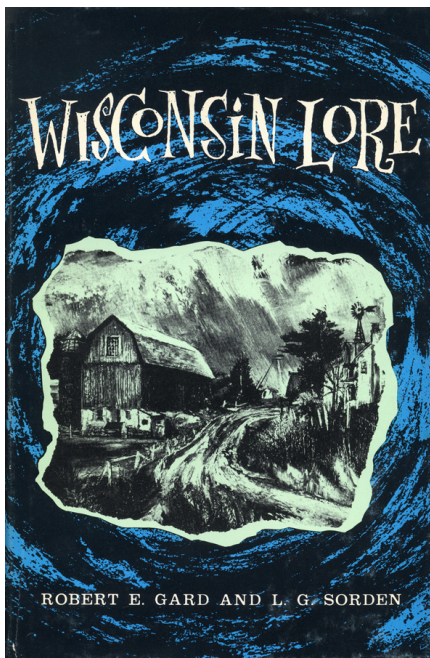
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The Driftless Area



Meandering in the Driftless Area



Wisconsin Lore

by Bob Gard and L.G. Sorden

Here is an area of Wisconsin that he most appreciated. The Driftless Area escaped glaciation in the last Ice Age. Thus, its valleys are river cut and steep. On a Sunday, Harold would join his neighbor Bob Gard, founding director of the Wisconsin Idea Theatre at the university and the Gard Theatre in Spring Green and drive through the countryside. The two men shared an interest in lore and literature. I am sure that “The Village Blacksmith”, was one of the poems that they enjoyed reading together, wandering in the Driftless Area. They would drive along a narrow road and finally get to an intersection, flip a coin to decide to go right or left, and thereby go by random walk through this wonderful landscape. Harold Rusch would enthuse about trips on the Mississippi at the very edge of this Driftless Area - taking a riverboat cruise on the Mississippi, observing the bluffs, and dining on catfish.

I shall close my comments by reading to you a poem, written a century ago at the time of Harold’s birth, but appropriate today. I believe this poem captures Harold’s attitude.

If—
By Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

If we were writing this poem today we would not choose that same last line, we would end with “You'll have grown up, my child” or something like that. And indeed, we see in McArdle today a community of students, postdocs, and faculty that is enriched equally by women as by men. But all of us in our research and our lives in Wisconsin follow the spirit of this poem with which I end my tribute to Harold Rusch.