

JEFF BYERS

Philip Battell & Sarah F. Cowles Stewart

Professor Emeritus of Chemistry

Middlebury College



Friday, December 5th

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Steele 006

“One Thing Always Leads to Another: From Steele Hall to Emeritus”

Abstract: Prof. Emeritus Jeff Byers will share stories, tracing key discoveries made with his undergraduate collaborators, observations on career development, and the occasional (hopefully) humorous anecdote. Most of Jeff’s research has been in the development of novel radical chain reactions for use in organic synthesis. The underlying theme of the lecture will be on how new science arises from the sometimes-random curiosity induced by prior discoveries.

Bio: Jeff received his B.S. in Chemistry from the University of Rochester in 1979, working in the lab of William Saunders measuring Carbon-14 isotope effects, while minoring in fraternity house basements. He completed his Ph.D. at Dartmouth in 1984, in the lab of Tom Spencer, developing novel annulations arising from reactions of cyclopropane nucleophiles with alpha-formyl ketone derivatives, and introducing the denizens of Steele Hall to the questionable pleasures of organosulfur chemistry. A two-year postdoctoral fellowship with Gary Keck at the University of Utah ignited Jeff’s career-long interests in radical chemistry prior to his arrival at Middlebury College as a Visiting Assistant Professor in 1986. Jeff eventually rose through the ranks, having recently retired after 39 years on the Middlebury faculty, and currently holds the far-too-long title of “Philip Battell & Sarah F. Cowles Stewart Professor Emeritus of Chemistry”. More than 110 students have worked in Jeff’s laboratory, 39 of whom have gone on to earn advanced degrees (mostly Ph.D.’s) in chemistry or allied sciences, and 36 have gone on to medical school and careers as physicians, many of them in careers with a research component.

Jeff is married to his ever-patient wife Cathy, a retired elementary school teacher, and has two adult daughters; Emily, who is a research chemist at Vitro Glass in Pittsburgh, and Sara, an X-ray technologist in Burlington, VT. He has enjoyed a lifetime love of the mountains, having ascended about 150 different peaks, and has been a competitive endurance athlete as well. With age, injury, and retirement, he enjoys seeing the world from cruise ships and has served as an elected Justice of the Peace in Middlebury.