

Dedication to Dr. Stephen Schneider

Marilyn Cornelius*

As I write this dedication, it is comforting to me that The Stanford Journal of Law, Science & Policy is a part of Dr. Schneider's vision for an interdisciplinary approach to environmental problem solving, which he saw as a dynamic interplay between the natural and social sciences, law and policy, non-profits, the media, government agencies, and global organizations.

I think of the deluge of tributes to Dr. Schneider to date. These, and the inadequate words I offer here, are dwarfed by the enormity of his vision and passion. However, I write anyway in the hope that my small contribution will elucidate another side of this remarkable human being, and help heal the gaping hole in my soul.

Dr. Schneider would often say he was in the trenches, fighting for clear understanding of and sensible action on climate change. For two years, I was one of his lifelines in those trenches. I had a rare opportunity to work closely with Dr. Schneider as his assistant. I managed his calendar, speaking events, communication, and travel. I corresponded with people from Congress, the media, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and so many others on his behalf while he was traveling. I sometimes assisted with the review process for *CLIMATIC CHANGE*, Dr. Schneider's interdisciplinary journal. Immersed in his world, I saw first-hand his unwavering dedication to conducting innovative climate change research, providing clear and fair communication about climate science, offering leadership in IPCC assessment process and meetings, advocating for interdisciplinary environmental research, and teaching and advising numerous students and community members.

He was a true scientist. He trusted the scientific method. He had no trouble revising his views based on new findings. He used to say, "The most dangerous biases are the ones you're unaware of." As a scientist, he always remained true to what was known, explained what was contested, and admitted what was unknown according to the most current science.

He was also prescient. For instance, he wrote his paper on geoengineering, *Geoengineering—Could—or Should—We Do It?*,¹ in 1996, and it was still the most appropriate article to consult a few years ago when a journalist called his office about the topic. Also, an interview with Dr. Schneider in 1979 revealed his startlingly clear understanding of the projected increase in carbon dioxide and the uncertain consequences for climate, as well as future generations.²

He was an extraordinarily talented communicator. He could condense complex climate science and policy issues into a five-minute speech using simple language and wise metaphors, and then proceed to inform, educate, and advise Congressional and Senate committees. I watched him speak to diverse audiences. About speaking, he always said, "Know thy audience, know thy self, and know thy stuff!" He always began with what the audience knew, and then

* Ph.D. candidate, Emmett Interdisciplinary Program in Environment & Resources, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

¹ Stephen H. Schneider, *Geoengineering: Could—Or Should—We Do It?*, 33 *CLIMATIC CHANGE* 291 (1996).

² Broadcast Interview with Stephen H. Schneider (1979), available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pB2ugPM0cRM> (posting by Peter Sinclair, Greenman Studio LLC).

guided them to what he knew, what was uncertain, and what he thought we should do. He was quick on his feet and enjoyed updating his presentations with new information. He loved communicating with people. He always included pictures of birds, other wildlife, and fun photos from his travels. He often had clever jokes handy.

Jokes aside, he was a fighter for truth. He courageously debunked pernicious skeptics who sought to spread misinformation about the status of climate science. In the last few years, Dr. Schneider told me he was spending about thirty percent of his time (and, I thought, losing precious sleep) to repeatedly set the story straight. Albert Einstein was correct when he said, “Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.”

He was a noble and global leader. Dr. Schneider fought hard to make sure the IPCC process was conducted fairly, accurately, and in the best interest of science and the public. He also fought to keep political corruption to a minimum, and ensure that important voices were heard in the process. He was a proponent for the Small Island Developing States, which face sea-level rise, coastal erosion, coral bleaching, and more. This warmed my heart, as I was born in Fiji.

He was a powerful catalyst. As his assistant, I would watch people transform as they left the office after a meeting with Dr. Schneider. Students would come in with questions and doubts, and would leave inspired and with a clear plan of action several notches more ambitious than they had considered before. I, too, changed and grew under his wing. I became more and more convinced that I had to focus on climate change for my own research because it was going to make other environmental problems worse, and because of the inherent unfairness in the way climate change impacts would be distributed around the world.

While working with Dr. Schneider, I was also preparing my application to the Emmett Interdisciplinary Program in Environment & Resources (E-IPER). My past academic and professional experiences had made it clear that I had to work in between disciplines to make a difference. It soon became clear that we shared this conviction. I also realized I had landed in the office of E-IPER’s co-founder, former faculty director, and biggest advocate. Through E-IPER, Dr. Schneider demonstrated his vision for a cohesive interdisciplinary effort at solving real environmental problems using a team-oriented, systems approach.

He did not stop there. He made sure to bolster E-IPER so that academic and professional communities would understand the need for interdisciplinary problem-solvers. Many E-IPER Ph.D., joint J.D.-M.S., and joint M.B.A.-M.S. graduates find meaningful employment because the world is beginning to recognize the practical and intellectual promise of interdisciplinary programs like E-IPER. In this sense, Dr. Schneider saw all interdisciplinary students as his intellectual children³ and nurtured them to be the best they could be. I became one of these children in 2007 when I was accepted into E-IPER.

He was kind, humble, accepting, and respectful. He made me feel as though it was all right to be exactly where I was, while simultaneously showing me where I might go, if I believed I could. By believing in me, he helped me believe I could. I am grateful beyond words.

I am sure, like me, you have your own story of how Dr. Schneider changed your life. We are working on our respective passions that he helped identify, ignite, and sustain. Our projects each represent a piece of the beautiful fractal of his many ongoing contributions toward a better world. We are part of his legacy. For me, this is a living legacy of action to fight for justice,

³ I borrow this very fitting phrase from Andy Gerhardt, Ph.D. Candidate, Emmett Interdisciplinary Program in Environment & Resources, Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

honesty, solidarity, and cooperation in a changing world and a changing climate. Most of all, Dr. Schneider's passing is a call to be true to ourselves and give our best, as he did.

Steve, as he liked to be called, was impressive in every way. It was his passion and commitment to improving the status quo that hooked me from the start. I am still hooked. Steve is one of my ultimate role models for how to have integrity and how to hope. He had a clear vision for what needed to be done, how to do it creatively, and most of all, how to *never give up*.

The 2010-11 Executive Board of The Stanford Journal of Law, Science & Policy is honored to dedicate this volume, "Geoengineering Responses to Climate Change," to the memory of Dr. Stephen H. Schneider.