

Dr. William Robert (Bill) Bauer, born July 10, 1939, passed away on September 23, 2021 at the age of 82. He was born in Friend, Nebraska and grew up in McCook, Nebraska, and his death occurred in his current home city of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

From a very young age, Bill was identified as an extremely gifted student and his K-12 education in McCook was marked by an individualized curriculum that allowed him to nurture his innate curiosity and scientific talents. Upon graduating high school, Bill continued his education at the California Institute of Technology, where he graduated with a B.S. in Chemistry (with high honors and distinctions) and where he eventually earned his Ph.D. in Chemistry. He received a Marshall Scholarship in 1962 and studied at Oxford University before returning to CalTech. He taught briefly at the University of Colorado-Boulder before moving to the State University of New York at Stony Brook, which became his academic and scientific home for more than 30 years, and where he is currently recognized as Professor Emeritus of Microbiology.

Bill's central scientific passion was to study the structure of DNA, specifically the "supercoiling" of DNA which requires great energy. Bill was utterly fascinated with measuring how much energy this process required. Enzymes inside cells – known as topoisomerases - can also wind (and unwind) DNA. A hallmark achievement in Bill's career was his discovery (in 1977) of the first topoisomerase inside a virus. He co-authored dozens of articles and his work was cited hundreds of times.

From an early age, Bill was aware of his identity as a gay man. Needless to say, in a small town in the middle of America in the 1950s, this was a difficult identity to embrace, much less openly display. He overcame these challenges and lived openly and proudly, even being present for the protests at the Stonewall Inn in New York City in 1969 which launched the "gay liberation" movement in the U.S. and continuing through the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and beyond. In the early 2000s, he met Carlos Sanchez from Buenos Aires, Argentina, and they became married as soon as it was legal to do so in the United States, Carlos remaining his devoted and dedicated partner until his passing.

Bill is preceded in death by his sister, Betty Whitney, and his parents, Doris and Robert Bauer. He is survived by husband Carlos Bauer, cousins Judy Sweney and Jane Raetz, nephew Bill Whitney and niece Elizabeth Pearson, and many, many friends and colleagues.