

About Rudy M. Baum



Rudy M. Baum was deeply committed to communicating science to a wide audience throughout his 40-plus year career.

Baum graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Duke University in 1975 with a BA in chemistry and spent one year studying at Georgetown Medical School before taking a leave of absence to explore a career in journalism. He joined the staff of the Education Division of the American Chemical Society in Washington, D.C., in 1976, where he first produced and coordinated ACS's program of live Short Courses and then moved on to produce and edit ACS's highly regarded Audio Courses.

He joined the staff of *Chemical & Engineering News* (C&EN) in 1980 as a production editor and moved to the San

Francisco Bay Area in 1981 to become the magazine's West Coast Bureau Head, a position he held for 14 years. His coverage included all areas of basic chemical research in the Western United States, especially physical chemistry, atmospheric chemistry, and the discovery of C₆₀, carbon nanotubes, and nanotechnology.

Baum's basic approach to his position was that C&EN was not simply a magazine devoted to covering the chemistry enterprise for other chemists, but that it was, rather, a magazine that covered a broad range of important scientific topics for chemists and other interested readers. As such, in addition to his coverage of basic chemical science, Baum produced in-depth articles that covered a wide range of environmental issues such as California's controversial Proposition 65 requiring the labeling of potential carcinogens on consumer products, the evolution/creationism debate, sustainability, the use of animals in scientific research, and global climate change. In particular, he committed C&EN to continuing in-depth coverage of the emerging HIV/AIDS crisis, leading to extended news coverage, several extensive New Focus pieces, and an entire special HIV/AIDS issue. Prominent Harvard AIDS researcher William Haseltine once asked Baum why the most comprehensive coverage of HIV/AIDS he read was in a magazine entitled *Chemical & Engineering News*.

In 1994, Baum returned to Washington to become C&EN's Assistant Managing Editor for science/technology/education coverage, where he managed the magazine's largest group of reporters. He was promoted to Managing Editor in 1995 and, working closely with Editor-in-Chief Madeleine Jacobs, reinvented C&EN as the premier news magazine devoted to chemistry, the chemical enterprise, and important scientific issues such as STEM education, and the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. Baum was promoted to C&EN editor-in-chief in 2004. During his tenure (2004-2012) he wrote more than 300 editorials on topics ranging from climate change, energy, and sustainability to an appreciation of Kurt Vonnegut after the writer's death in 2007. Baum's editorials were widely read

outside of the ACS membership as attested to by the number of letters to the editor from non-ACS members.

Baum also gave numerous public talks about the issues he covered in his editorials. In October 2010, he gave a presentation entitled “Sustainable Growth is an Oxymoron” to the 25th Annual William S. Johnson Symposium at Stanford University. A year later, he gave an updated version of the talk to a public symposium at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which was [broadcast on PBS Wisconsin](#).

After his retirement as editor-in-chief of C&EN in 2012, Baum served as CE&N’s first editor-at-large (2012-2014) from which position he wrote book reviews and solicited and edited book reviews for the magazine from outside experts. He also wrote for outside publications such as the Chemical Heritage Foundation’s *Distillations*. In 2019, he authored a comprehensive history of the science underpinning climate change dating back to the early 19th century for the open-access history of chemistry journal *Substantia*. After publication of that article, he gave talks on the subject to the Portland ACS Local Section and a lecture to science undergraduates at Portland State University. Planned public talks on the topic were cut short by the Covid-19 pandemic.

He was a Fellow of ACS and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Baum is remembered for his talent for translating technical concepts for the public, his mentorship, and his willingness to tackle controversial topics. Baum’s editorials carried strong opinions and were a source of lively debate among readers that played out in C&EN’s letters to the editor. He served on ACS Climate Science Working Groups, helped to develop and revise the ACS Climate Science Toolkit, and contributed many ACS policy statements as a member of the ACS Committee on Science.

Baum, 68, died in Portland, Oregon, on March 21, 2022. He was married to Jan, a retired third-grade schoolteacher, for 40 years. They have a son, Rudy Michael, and a daughter, Grace. Rudy and Jan enjoyed traveling and were avid about outdoor activities, including hiking, bicycling, and scuba diving.

Representative Editorials

(About 350 total during Baum’s tenure as C&EN Editor-in-chief)

- [“Earth and Its People,”](#) *Chem. Eng. News*, **2012**, 90, 17
- [“Chemistry: Alive and Well,”](#) *Chem. Eng. News*, **2010**, 88, 3
(Discusses how strong the chemistry enterprise is from the perspective of the CPhI Conference, the 2010 Nobel Prizes, and the Walter S. Johnson Symposium)
- [“Climategate,”](#) *Chem. Eng. News*, **2009**, 87, 3
- [“Nobel Nonsense,”](#) *Chem. Eng. News*, **2008**, 86, 5
(Discusses the iniquity of omitting Robert Gallo from the Nobel Prize in Medicine or Physiology for the discovery of HIV as the cause of AIDS)
- [“Global Warming Denial,”](#) *Chem. Eng. News*, **2007**, 85, 3
- [“Feline Bloodlines,”](#) *Chem. Eng. News*, **2007**, 85, 3
(Lighthearted and personal look at research reported in *Science* on how domestic cats evolved)
- [“Global Warming News,”](#) *Chem. Eng. News*, **2006**, 84, 5
(Notes that NASA had confirmed that 2005 was the warmest year in recorded history, that the Bush Administration scrubbed the data from NASA’s website, and that NASA subsequently reaffirmed its commitment to “openness.” This is one of about 25 editorials Baum wrote on climate change during his nine-year tenure as C&EN Editor-in-chief.)
- [“Unintelligible Design,”](#) *Chem. Eng. News*, **2005**, 83, 3
(Three references document a recurring theme. This first one discusses biology curricula; the second [Reactions](#), (*Chem. Eng. News*, **2005**, 83, 6), contains five letters to the editor,

four of which take strong exception to the original editorial; the third, "[Evolution Under Fire](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **2005**, *83*, 3, Baum's editorial comments on the contrarian letters and prints four letters that respond to the original set of letters. This occurred numerous times in response to Baum's editorials on controversial topics such as evolution, climate change, and sustainability.)

Representative Feature Articles

- C&EN Talks With: "[Alan Alda: Actor discusses His New Play on Marie Curie and Communicating Science](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **2011**, *89*, 30
- "[Researchers, Other Experts Examine Climate Engineering Issues](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **1994**, *72*, 26
- "[Commercial Uses of Fullerenes and Derivatives Slow to Develop](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **1993**, *71*, 8
- "[RU-486: Abortion Controversy in U.S. Clouds Future of Promising Drug](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **1991**, *69*, 7
- "[Biomedical Researchers Work to Counter Animal Rights Agenda](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **1990**, *68*, 9
- "[Adding Iron to Ocean Makes Waves as Way to Cut Greenhouse CO₂](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **1990**, *68*, 27
- "[AIDS Conference: New findings, but no breakthroughs](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **1988**, *66*, 4; (One of six International AIDS Conferences covered by Rudy Baum that resulted in featured articles in C&EN)
- "[Stratospheric Science Undergoing Change: Sophisticated atmospheric measurements and reaction kinetics studies and better modeling are strengthening stratospheric chemistry](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **1982**, *37*, 21

Representative Publications, Essays, and Book Reviews

- "[Taking the Earth's Temperature](#)," *Substantia*, **2019**, *03*, 27
- "[Future Calculations: The first climate change believer](#)," *Distillations*, **2016**, *02*, 38
- Review of "[The Importance of Being Ignorant](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **2013**, *91*, 38
- Review of "[Radical Abundance: How a revolution in nanotechnology will change civilization](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **2013**, *91*, 36
- "[Sustainable Growth Is an Oxymoron](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **2010**, *88*, 44
- Review of "[A Passion for Nature: The life of John Muir](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **2009**, *87*, 41
- "[Perspective on China](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **2005**, *83*, 11
- Review of "[Mendeleev's Dream: The quest for the elements](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **2002**, *80*, 43
- "[Science and the Nature of Awe](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **2001**, *79*, 56
- Science Insights: "[Wintertime Reflections on Global Warming](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **1999**, *77*, 45
- Review of "[The Periodic Table](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **1985**, *63*, 58
- "[Science Confronts Creationist Assault](#)," *Chem. Eng. News*, **1982**, *60*, 12