

mercial organization. Meanwhile, sources at DOE say James Decker, deputy director of the Office of Science, will fill in for Krebs on an acting basis, a role he played for

months when Trivelpiece departed, and which he is most likely to have again in the remaining year of the Clinton administration.

IRWIN GOODWIN

Brown Eulogized as 'Mr. Science,' Even as Widow Loses Bid for Seat

Among the tributes to the late Congressman George E. Brown Jr (see PHYSICS TODAY, September, page 48), at a two-hour memorial, "Remembering Mr. Science," held in the auditorium of the American Association for the Advancement of Science on 27 September, was the reading of a little-known letter that certified his deft wit. The letter had been written by Brown to the *Ontario Daily Report*, a small newspaper in his California district, after the paper had published, on 20 September 1985, a scathing editorial headed "No Defending Brown's Stand on Defense." Brown decided to defend himself against the attack and refused any help from his staff in doing so. "The letter was George at his most derisive," said a former staffer. "For all his amiability and urbanity, George had another side best revealed in that letter."

Brown began his letter by thanking the newspaper for the editorial. Then he wrote:

My first reason for expressing thanks is set forth in your first paragraph. You acknowledge that this is your first editorial about me in several months. Thanks for your restraint. My second reason . . . is your acknowledgement that I have been very active in exposing some of the president's military policies, particularly "Star Wars."

You even acknowledge that I have become somewhat of a leader in this area. To quote you, ' . . . not since his Vietnam protest years has he been so prominent as the leader of his own band.'

I suppose it would be too much to expect you to mention that 'his own band' now includes a majority of the House of Representatives, to say nothing of a large majority of the National Academy of Sciences and the scientific community in general.

You do raise a couple of points that might wound someone more sensitive than myself. You seem to hint, nay, almost assert, that I am not a dynamic, charismatic, and influential congressman, despite my national

role in opposing the president. But in a spirit of true humility, I want to thank you for the reminder of my fallibility, and I will try in the future to become more dynamic, charismatic, and influential in opposing policies I consider detrimental to the future existence of society.

The last point you make that I wish to respond to (you make several that I have refuted many times in the past, but you continue to insist on printing them) is your worry that people around the country may think that I represent 'the most left-leaning district in America.' Let me assure you that I always try to give my audiences a true picture of the political nature of my district. . . . I generally describe it as moderate to conservative, with large numbers of military, military retirees, and dependents, conservative Democrats, many of southern background, and increasing numbers of conservative Yuppies.

I admit that many of my constituents don't agree with me on everything that I do, but most are willing to listen to me. I generally add that there are some rightwing kooks in my district and some extremely conservative editors (I generally mention your newspaper in this connection).

However, even conservative editors have their use. I reprint

a lot of their material, send it to my liberal mailing list, and beg for more money to defend myself against the kind of garbage which they write. It almost always works.

So thanks again for making me the object of your attention.

Sincerely, George E. Brown Jr,
Member of Congress

Most politicians refrain from heckling, especially in print. But Brown wasn't like most politicians. Though he was the longest-serving member of Congress from California, in his 18th term at the time of his death, he had usually squeaked by in elections. His last election in 1998 was different. Brown's margin of victory was 15% over his Republican opponent, and almost all political pundits figured he could win again in 2000.

So, while still mourning the death of her husband, Marta Macias Brown followed the example of more than three dozen political widows by seeking election to his seat in Congress. In the past, virtually all congressional widows who ran for a husband's office have won. In recent years in California, Mary Bono and Lois Capps each replaced their late husbands in easy elections. Marta Brown, however, had a harder time. She was unable to win the endorsement of the state Democratic Party in the open primary on 21 September or to get the backing of labor unions in the gritty blue-collar heartland of the so-called Inland Empire, which runs from Ontario east to San Bernardino. The primary attracted ten candidates, including five Democrats—notably, Joe Baca, a state senator who had served three terms. With little time to campaign between George's death and the election, the candidate's party connections appeared to be a deciding factor at the polls. In the end, Baca won and Marta Brown ran second, 518 votes behind.

IRWIN GOODWIN

Washington Ins and Outs

Meserve Joins NRC; New Faces at State Department and NSF

On 1 October, a day after the latest nuclear accident at the Tokaimura uranium reprocessing plant in Japan, the US Senate unanimously confirmed President Clinton's nomination of **Richard A. Meserve** to be chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The president had named Meserve for the position on 6 August, and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works had

held a hearing on the nomination on 23 September and reported its unanimous endorsement of the nominee to the full Senate only six days later. The speed of the Senate's action suggested to some that the Tokaimura incident had nuclear regulatory repercussions in Washington.

Meserve, a partner at the prestigious Washington law firm of Covington & Burling, has an impressive