

# Recollections of Charles Beaudette

David J. Nagel — August 16, 2020

Charles Beaudette came into the cold fusion community by an unusual route for an unusual reason. He was an Engineering graduate of the MIT, and a successful businessman. In the middle 1990s, he no longer ran the company he founded, nor worked for another company. He was looking for something to do. Charles was in his 60s then, and energetic. He had some experience with writing, which he found to be pleasant. Hence, he was considering writing about something. While writing these recollections, I learned from his biography on Amazon that, as an MIT student, he was managing editor of *The Tech*, the official student newspaper. So, his interest in writing had deep roots.

I no longer recall how Charles heard of cold fusion and of me. However, I recently learned from an interview that Tom Grimshaw conducted with Charles in May of 2020 that Charles had followed the cold fusion saga from its beginning in 1989. Charles contacted me and asked to meet in Washington, DC, maybe in 1996 or 1997. We first met for a 7:00 a.m. breakfast at the Army and Navy Club, which is about three blocks north of the White House. We had an extended and pleasant conversation. At that time, cold fusion seemed to be only one possible topic under consideration by Charles. Not long after that, Charles appeared to focus on cold fusion. He began to research the topic with the rigor characteristic of an MIT Engineer. Grimshaw's interview makes clear now that Charles had actually decided to write about cold fusion about the time he attended ICCF5 in Monaco in April of 1995.

Charles got information from many sources, myself included. He also travelled to talk with individuals. He decided to write a scholarly book arguing the case for the reality of cold fusion, and also addressing the odd treatment of the topic by the larger scientific community. He asked me to edit it, given my background as a scientist and my long involvement in cold fusion. I agreed for a couple of reasons. For one, I would read the book anyway later, so it made sense for me to read it, when there was still a chance to help with it. And, I was able to provide some scientific "quality control." Charles was a "quick study" and thorough, but we had complementary backgrounds. We shared an interest in making sure that the book was free of errors. Then, and still now, there are too many mistakes made and propagated within the field.

The exact timing of my review of the draft of Charles' book escapes me now, but the first edition of his book *Excess Heat: How Cold Fusion Research Prevailed* appeared in 2000. So, my editing must have been done in the years of the late 1990s. I would get thick stacks of papers with the drafts of the book. I went through hundreds of pages looking at everything from organization to clarity to grammar to punctuation. In the process, I marked up the pages with red ink,

and mailed them back to Charles. That phase must have taken about one year.

For some reason, probably in recognition of my efforts, Charles asked me to write an Introduction to *Excess Heat*. The following excerpts from my Introduction should make clear what I thought of Charles' book:

*Excess Heat* deftly makes the case, in fashion reminiscent of a legal brief, for serious attention to the subject. This book concludes that there is no basis now for dismissing cold fusion. Each of the major reasons that are offered for ignoring, or actively opposing, further research is shown to be flawed. The persistent lack of a theoretical explanation and problems with experimental reproducibility are major legitimate concerns, but they are not reasons to dismiss the topic.

The fact that cold fusion is without a satisfactory explanation at present merely ranks it with other topics in science which await understanding. Most of the time, the discoverers of a new scientific effect are able to explain its origin, many times in the initial report. However, the history of science has several famous examples for which decades passed between an observation and its elucidation or between development of an idea and its substantiation.

The book lays the needed foundation for a forward-looking plan to (1) put the experimental situation on a firm basis, (2) arrive at the desired understanding, and (3) exploit the remarkable new effect(s) of cold fusion for the good of humans and their planet.

Charles generously put my name on the cover of the book, along with that of the famous writer and futurist Arthur C. Clarke, who wrote the Foreword to the book. I recall my amazement when I first learned that I was in such good company!

Charles decided to self-publish the book, and set up the Oak Grove Press, LLC. The 2000 First Edition seemed to have a significant impact among the scientists and others interested in cold fusion. It did a dramatically better job on both the history and science of the field than any of the earlier books by physicists or journalists. However, I have no recollection of an impact of the book outside of the field of cold fusion. That might be because there was no such impact.

*Excess Heat* has many attractive features. One of them is the dozen "Summations" that were in some of the two dozen chapters. They serve to encapsulate the longer discussions or provide concise summaries of significant topics.



Chase Peterson and Charles Beaudette at ICCF14 in 2008.

One could read those Summations and get a very good idea about the history and status of cold fusion twenty years ago.

The initial edition was rather, but not completely, comprehensive. Charles wanted to add material on nuclear evidence for cold fusion in a Second Edition. Again, he asked me to help, and again, I spent months going through thick stacks of pages of the new version. The Second Edition appeared in 2002.

Charles generously sent me many boxes of both editions of *Excess Heat*. I was glad to be able to give them to colleagues, visitors and various officials I briefed on cold fusion. Overall, our collaboration was a win-win situation. Charles got the help he requested, and I learned a lot from his writing.

In 2007, Charles donated his organized files to the Marriott Library of the University of Utah. The 19-page list of contents of the collections is at:

<http://newenergytimes.com/v2/library/2007/2007BeaudetteArchiveIndex.pdf>

Examination of the contents shows some of the details of the work he put into learning and writing about cold fusion. There are long lists of the names of people in the cold fusion field with whom he interacted. Charles' archiving of the papers at the place, and in the manner he did, is a useful precedent for current work on archiving of information on cold fusion by Grimshaw and others.

Charles and I exchanged dozens of emails in the years since 2000. It was invariably interesting and informative to communicate with him. He was always the gentleman. Our last interactions were recent. He asked me to put names to the faces he photographed at ICCF14 in 2008. I was happy to see a photo of Charles' wife Kate. I have no doubt that she played a major role during all the time that Charles spent on cold fusion. Our thanks to her! The photos include an image of Charles with Chase Peterson, the former President of the University of Utah. Our last exchange occurred during May of this year. Charles wrote, "Last week I was diagnosed with Melanoma brain tumors. I had no trouble setting aside major surgery: I am content." I was glad to read the last statement. Contentment, like peace of mind, eludes most people.