



PSSC: Hearing the Music

by Leon Cooper

Fifty years since the beginning of PSSC. Fifty years since non-conservation of parity and BCS. Those were vintage years. In spite of the time that has passed, I recall with some clarity and much fondness the enthusiasm and joy of our early PSSC association with Wheeler Loomis, Uri Haber-Schaim and others at the University of Illinois.

My participation awakened in me what has become a life-long effort to present physics both to physicists and non-physicists in a manner that allows them to hear the music while they are doing the finger exercises. My elementary text, *Introduction to the Meaning and Structure of Physics*, first published by Harper and Row and now available in a slimmer version from the University Press of New England as *Physics: Structure and Meaning* was, in a way, an outgrowth or continuation of my efforts with PSSC.

I continue to believe that the fundamental ideas of physics including quantum theory and relativity can be communicated without an excess of mathematical technique and that this provides the proper introduction to the subject for both physicists and non-physicists.

In our present frenzied educational world with its headlong rush to professional careers, this is a hard sell that does not lead to easy commercial success.

I recall encountering a colleague who told me he was using my text for his introductory course. Since he hailed from a mid-western university, I had an immediate vision of a thousand or so sales and the royalties that would result.

“No,” he informed me “I haven’t assigned your text for my class. It’s too sophisticated. I’m using it to structure my lectures.” “Oh well,” I said, “at least we sold one copy.” He looked a bit sheepish: “Actually, I’m using a desk copy the publisher sent.”

On this fiftieth anniversary, my thanks to PSSC for having started me in this direction and my congratulations to those of us who have labored so long and so hard.

One day we will triumph.