

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY  
ITHACA, NEW YORK 14850

## **NEWSLETTER**

Issue No. 15

August 1974

### FACILITIES

One of the great things that has happened to the department this year is the renovation of the undergraduate teaching laboratories in Baker Lab. These laboratories, as I am sure you all recall, were extremely well designed and well built. But in the intervening fifty years there have been changes that could not be accommodated without extensive renovation to all five floors.

Now the basement has one area for the preparation of reagents and storage of chemicals used in each of the 5-6 laboratory courses taught in this East side of Baker. Also, in the basement is the Electronics Shop and storage of instruments such as balances, spectrometers, meters, etc. A service elevator has been installed connecting all five floors.

The old, open lab areas on each of the remaining four floors has been partitioned into a service area and 5 laboratory modules per floor. Each of these modules will hold 20-22 students. Each module has a different color scheme, dropped ceilings, fluorescent lighting, more hoods and modern air-conditioning equipment.

The students, staff and faculty are all enthused and anxious to occupy these new quarters. Interestingly, the quality of the original Alberene Stone bench tops is still better than what is available today. These stone tops were refinished, cut to size and installed in the new modules. So, if you are still saddened by the change that came about, come and inspect our bench tops of fifty years ago.

## ALUMNI

The open-house for Cornell Chemists was held on the afternoon of June 14, 1974. In addition to the Cornell "mainstays", Lauby, Lynn Hoard and Clyde Mason, as well as several members of the department, there were approximately twenty-five old grads who enjoyed refreshments, tours and the pictures of earlier days. More details of Alumni are given in "Lauby's Recollections".

We recently received word that Dr. Everett C. Hughes, who received his Ph.D. from Cornell in 1930, was awarded the 1974 Morley Medal Award by the Cleveland Section of the ACS. This award gave recognition to his unique leadership qualities during his many years with the Standard Oil Company (Ohio). When he retired as Vice President of Research in 1969, he "retired at high speed" to another challenging position — that of Director of Medical Research in Otolaryngology at the University of Southern California.

We also received notes from Evelyn and Eric Erenrich and "Skip" Ulmer who received Ph.D's within the last two years. From the Class of '53, Bernard Eckstein sent an interesting letter.

John and Ann Lemley have returned to Cornell after two years at the University of Texas, Austin. John is now Research Manager in the Crystal Growing Facility of the Materials Science Center. Ann will be a Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry this fall.

## FACULTY

There were three faculty promotions effective July 1, 1974. These were Melvin Goldstein, who was promoted to Full Professor, and Elliot Elson and Martin Semmelhack, who were promoted to Associate Professors.

Two faculty members have received Guggenheim Fellowships during the coming year. George Morrison will spend the 1974-75 academic year at the University of Paris-Sud, Orsay, France and Melvin Goldstein will continue his work at Hebrew University from January through June 1975. Others on leaves will be Michell Sienko, who will be located at the University of Vienna for the 1974-75 academic year, Benjamin Widom, who will spend the spring term at Harvard University and Robert Hughes, who is now at the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C. and will be at Stanford University through the spring term.

### GRADUATE STUDENTS

Two graduate students were selected by the faculty to receive special recognition. Thomas Opie was chosen for the Outstanding Graduate Student Award and Randall Winans was selected as the recipient of the Procter & Gamble Fellowship for the coming year. The faculty also voted to award DuPont Teaching Prizes to the following teaching assistants; Craig Cogger, Bobby Dawkins, Jeffrey Fox, Daniel Gladkowski, Robert Matheson, Gary Mercer and Leverett Smith. These prizes consist of a cash award and recognition of teaching assistants who have demonstrated excellence in teaching and the desire to upgrade the quality of undergraduate education.

### VISITING LECTURERS

The Baker Lecture Series will be presented this fall by Professor Jack Lewis, University Chemical Laboratory, Cambridge, England. These 10-12 lectures will pertain to reactions of organic molecules coordinated to metals, and will be presented from the second week in September through October 24, 1974.

The Debye Lecture Series will be given by Professor A. Eschenmoser, Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zürich. The three lectures, given during the week of November 18th, have the general title "Studies on Organic Synthesis".

Harold C. Matraw

## Chairman's Column

Summer is usually a rather peaceful time at Cornell. However, this summer was led off by the dedication of our new research building as the Spencer T. Olin Chemistry Laboratories. We are very happy to have this building bear Mr. Olin's name since he has contributed so greatly to chemistry at Cornell for many years. I personally enjoyed giving Mr. Olin a tour of the chemistry facilities.

The major renovation of our undergraduate laboratories which is going on has increased the noise level considerably. Surprisingly, the construction is more-or-less on schedule, and the laboratories should be ready around mid-August. We will then have a couple of weeks to prepare the laboratories for the Fall term. We already have reconciled ourselves to utter chaos for the first term of operation of the new laboratories while the bugs are being shaken out. However, those of you who remember the original laboratories will not recognize the present facilities as being derived from the same space. The individual laboratory modules are really beautiful, both functionally and aesthetically, and should provide a rewarding educational experience for both student and teacher.

One more phase of our building program remains, namely the construction of some additional laboratory modules and a teaching theater especially designed for continuing education, laboratory instruction and special audio-visual aids. We hope to begin construction in the Spring of 1975 if sufficient funds are available. We are very gratified by the recent award of 1.5 million dollars to our building program by the Kresge Foundation. Unfortunately, a substantial sum of money, around 4 million dollars, still is needed to complete our building program and to pay off accumulated debts. With the rapid inflation we never seem to be able to get caught up.

We again are anticipating saturating enrollments in our introductory and organic chemistry courses. Our new laboratories will be utilized every afternoon (Monday through Friday) and several mornings. Our enrollment pressure largely stems from the many fields related

to and requiring chemistry, especially biology and medicine. This is a national trend which I hope will reverse itself somewhat soon since it is leading to many disappointed and/or misplaced undergraduates. There simply is not room enough in medical schools and other popular professional schools for all of the qualified applicants. This past year only about 50% of the premedical students at Cornell seeking admission to medical schools were admitted. (The national average is about 33%.) Perhaps we will see some shift of students back into graduate study in chemistry and physics. Actually, industrial job opportunities in the next few years for chemistry Ph.D's look very good, although any extrapolation in these days of rampant inflation and a rapidly fluctuating economy is hazardous.

As usual, we must take things as they come, but I am sure that teaching and research in our department during this coming year will be as interesting and exciting as usual.

Gordon G. Hammes

CORNELL SOCIAL HOUR

ACS Fall Meeting

Tuesday, September 10, 1974

DENNIS HOTEL

Solarium

Atlantic City, New Jersey

at 5:30 P.M.

## Lauby's Recollections

### A Progress Report

This is a good time to take stock of our project to work up material on the history of Chemistry at Cornell. Eight years have passed since my retirement in 1966 when I undertook to continue the earlier studies made by Professor Chamot and Professor Rhodes. In March 1968, semi-annual NEWS LETTERS were initiated by Bill Gurowitz in behalf of the Chemistry Department to improve contact with its alumni. These have served admirably by providing news about the operation of the Department, changes in faculty, curriculum, and physical facilities, and reporting items of interest concerning alumni. In line with my concern with the history of Chemistry at Cornell, I engaged to provide a column for each issue, sketching items in the early history of our Department and continuing with my own recollections of Cornell experiences covering the years from 1917 up to the present. The NEWSLETTER has been received with interest and appreciation.

In the first NEWSLETTER I appealed to Cornell Chemists of all generations for help in collecting contributions of anecdotes, personal experiences, photographs and movie films, and issues of old departmental publications. The response has been excellent and I am grateful to all who have cooperated. Some have donated material to be added to our files. Others have lent photographs so we could have duplicates made and return the originals. Many have sent interesting reminiscences of their days at Cornell. One of the finest dividends I have reaped personally is the receipt of letters from old Cornell friends. And it has been most interesting to hear from Cornell chemists who preceded me and whose names I had run across in my historical searches. Responses have come from chemists who graduated as early as 1910 and from those of more recent vintages.

I regret that, due to a very busy schedule, in many instances I have not always been able to acknowledge individual contributions, but have had to resort to more general thanks in this column. Be

assured that all contributions are appreciated and go to swell my collection.

Contact with Cornell Chemistry Alumni has been greatly improved by the scheduling of Annual Open Houses for alumni of the Department, held on Friday afternoons of the Alumni weekends. Started informally in 1970, these have now become a regularly scheduled event. The fine Faculty Lounge is opened for the occasion and the other Emeritus Professors join me as hosts, with others of the faculty dropping in. Our historical collection of pictures are on display, especially featuring the group Departmental photographs which now extend from 1911 through 1933, with only a few blanks. Light refreshments are available and bull sessions are in order. Guided tours of renovated Baker and the Spencer T. Olin Chemistry Laboratory (Research Wing) are highlighted by a visit to the roof of the latter, from which there is an unexcelled 360 degree panorama of campus, gorges, Cayuga Lake and hills. Past Open Houses have been well attended and much appreciated. We invite you to come to Baker at your next reunion.

Many of the contributions which alumni have sent in have been relayed to you in past newsletters and I plan to continue this custom. Here are some additional gleanings; more will follow in future issues.

Stories about Henry Feehan continue to come in. Edward W. (Ed) Hughes, B. Chem. 1924, Ph.D. 1935 tells of Henry's remarkable memory for names and faces. "It seems that he had a keen memory for sounds too. One day I was at his window with another graduate student. In a brief pause in the conversation we heard the footsteps of a person walking in the hall on the second floor. They sounded just ordinary to me but Henry perked up and said it sounded to him like the walk of "so-and-so (he named a former student who had left Cornell several years earlier). The walker reached the stairwell and came down and, when we could see him, sure enough it was the man named by Henry. He had returned to Ithaca on business and dropped in unannounced." Other alumni have written of similar examples of Henry's total recall.

Ismond E. (Ike) Knapp, B. Chem. 1915, writes. "In my senior year I was chairman of the Chemists Banquet Committee. We asked A. W. Browne to sing a solo and he accepted our invitation. When he arose to sing he produced a toy cow, about 10 inches long, and when he pressed the cow's tail she emitted a deep bass note. I'm sorry I have forgotten the title of the song, but I well remember that whenever Brownie came to that particular note he would have the cow sing it. The performance was the hi-lite of the evening". Ike Knapp goes on to tell of his father who was a stockman in the basement of Morse Hall for many years and who played euchre with Henry during lunch hours. I well remember old Mr. Knapp as a very pleasant and helpful person who knew all the secrets of the catacombs under Morse Hall.

Anecdotes about Bancroft accumulate. W. J. O'Leary, Ph.D. 1933, recalls one. It was midwinter and Banty had just returned from an A.C.S. meeting in Boston. In a subsequent conversation, Banty mentioned that a primary stumbling block in inventing a theory was the difficulty of propounding something new that was plausible and initially tenable. He said this had been vividly demonstrated to him on his latest trip. He arose from his Pullman berth, dressed, left the train and proceeded to the meeting. During the meeting he noticed that his right foot seemed normal, but his left foot seemed cold or numb. The feeling grew as the day progressed. He formulated and discarded as untenable half a dozen theories to account for the feeling, which was complicated by the additional patently absurd feeling that "the foot had no stocking on it". That night when he undressed he verified that his left foot really was cold "because it actually didn't have a stocking on it. I evidently forgot to put it on when I dressed. My theory was basically sound but I rationalized myself out of it instead of looking for facts to substantiate it."

Lawrence P. (Larry) Gould, B. Chem. 1929, Ph.D. 1933 remembered Banty at University concerts. He had a seat on the aisle toward the front in Bailey Hall. Arrayed in tuxedo, he was always early and used to stand facing the rear and greeting friends until the concert started. He said he was glad to sit right behind Professor Otto Kinkeldey (musicologist) because he knew from him

when to applaud. (We regret to say that Larry Gould passed away in 1973 after a career as chemist with Allied Chemical at Syracuse.)

Allen B. Norton, B. Chem. 1913, sent this one in about Uncle Billy Orndorff. Old students used to tell new students that Uncle Billy had three wise cracks he used every year in his lectures. Progress in his course could be followed by noting if he had reached 1, 2, or 3. At the end of his lecture on perfume his final comment was "Before soap was discovered people used perfume. Many still rely on the former practice." Anyone remember the other two wise-cracks?

Floyd R. Newman, A.B. 1912, writes that the column about Tommy Briggs in our August 1973 Newsletter revived memories of some of the details of Tommy's life and career. Tommy was one of Newman's best friends on the campus and was his sponsor and preceptor. Newman did senior research on emulsions under Tommy, who later remarked that Newman's endeavors formed a tangible basis for Tommy to proceed in this field. In 1964 Newman endowed the Thomas R. Briggs Professorship in Engineering as a token of his regard. (Newman has also been a great benefactor to Cornell by providing gifts for the construction of the Newman Laboratory of Nuclear Physics and the Helen Newman Hall for Physical Education).

A source of much valuable material on the history of Cornell Chemistry are the issues of "The Cornell Chemist". Started in 1911, coincident with the adoption of the B. Chem. curriculum, this magazine was published four times each year through 1926. A complete file is in the Olin Research Library. I am hoping to build up a second file through donation of issues by alumni. Already some 17 issues have been received from G. W. Pawel B. Chem. 1911, Howard Hunter B. Chem. 1925, Ph.D. 1928, Emil Kline B. Chem. 1920, Ph.D. 1923, Victor Chalupski B. Chem. 1925, and Professor Clyde Mason. If you have any, I will be pleased to receive them.

After a considerable lapse of time, and effort by our Department in 1935 to restore communication with alumni was made by circulating "Cornell Chemists", a mimeographed newsheet. This was discontinued after a few years. Emil Kline has kindly forwarded three issues for 1935 and 1936. Anyone having copies can help by

sending them in for our file.

The collection of pictures relating to chemistry at Cornell has been growing steadily, thanks to the interest of many alumni. From 1911 to 1933, while the B. Chem. curriculum gave a close-knit department annual group pictures were taken, including faculty, graduate students and undergraduates in chemistry. Our collection of these is nearly complete but some items are not in very good shape. More are needed. In addition, I have a considerable number of senior class pictures. More pictures of faculty in formal and informal poses will enhance our file. And if any of you have movies you would care to donate they will be most welcome.

The Baker Lectureship was started in 1926 and is still going strong, interrupted only by the war years. We need pictures and reminiscences about the Baker Lecturers so a chapter dealing with this very important aspect of chemistry at Cornell can be written.

Larry Gould told about Professor Alfred Stock, an early Baker Lecturer who originated the vacuum line technique for handling volatile, air-sensitive materials and did pioneer work on silicon and boron hydrides. Stock was a Prussian Herr Geheimrat from the University of Berlin and was used to instant attention to his needs. He stayed at Willard Straight Hall and let it be known that he was Professor Doktor Geheimrat Stock and that in Germany he was accustomed to having his mail delivered on Sunday as well as other days. This was what he expected of the desk clerk at Willard Straight! The ingenuity of the student took care of this. He merely divided Saturday's mail in half and delivered one half on Saturday, the other half on Sunday. Everyone was happy.

Thanks to all of our alumni who have helped so much. And come to visit our Department often.

A. W. Laubengayer

Faculty Members

(Fall Term 1974)

A. C. Albrecht	M. J. Goldstein	E. L. Muetterties
J. T. Bartis	G. G. Hammes	R. F. Porter
S. H. Bauer	R. Hoffmann	H. A. Scheraga
C. A. Brown	R. E. Hughes	F. R. Scholer
J. M. Burlitch	F. A. Long	A. R. Schultz
W. D. Cooke	E. R. Lory	M. F. Semmelhack
E. L. Elson	G. M. Loudon	M. J. Sienko
R. C. Fay	H. C. Mattraw	D. A. Usher
M. E. Fisher	F. W. McLafferty	H. Van Wart
J. H. Freed	J. Meinwald	B. Widom
B. Ganem	W. T. Miller	J. R. Wiesenfeld
	G. H. Morrison	C. F. Wilcox

Emeritus Faculty

A. T. Blomquist	J. R. Johnson
J. L. Hoard	A. W. Laubengayer
M. L. Nichols	

Department of Chemistry  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY  
Ithaca, New York 14850  
U.S.A.

FIRST CLASS MAIL