

In Memory-Therald Moeller

by Dr. R S. Juvet, Professor of Chemistry Emeritus, ASU Professor Emeritus

Therald Moeller, past Chairman of the Department of Chemistry at ASU, died November 24, 1997 in Broken Arrow, OK, at the age of 84.

During the 45 years Professor Moeller was active in teaching and research, he guided the laboratory research of 43 Ph.D. students, 20 Postdoctoral Research Students, 11 M.S., and 25 B.S. students for a total of 99 research students in inorganic chemistry. Of these students, 39 are now professors themselves at universities throughout the U.S. and in Taiwan, Spain, India, Japan, Brazil, England, and Finland. Several of these former students have become Department Chairmen, and one a College President. Moeller's list of publications numbers 281 including 22 books and laboratory manuals authored or edited by him (32 books if Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Italian, and Polish editions are included). This enormous publication is one few have surpassed. One of these texts, "Inorganic Chemistry, an Advanced Text," was the "Bible" of inorganic chemistry for decades, enjoying worldwide adoption. Until its appearance, few U.S. Universities taught inorganic chemistry more advanced than the freshman level since only foreign texts were available and none of these was satisfactory. As soon as Moeller's book appeared, universities began to teach advanced inorganic chemistry, and this had an enormous influence on the development of this major field of chemistry in the U.S. and throughout the world. Moreover, Professor Moeller was cofounder, along with University of Illinois Professor John Bailar, of the American Chemical Society Division of Inorganic Chemistry in 1959, and he served as President and for many years as member of the Board of Directors of Inorganic Syntheses, Inc.

Therald Moeller was an outstanding lecturer, and recognition of his exceptional teaching ability was noted in 1981 by awarding him the Department of Chemistry Award for Distinction in Undergraduate Teaching, while in 1983 Moeller received the Alumni Association's Distinguished Teacher Award as best instructor at Arizona State University.

Moeller was born in North Bend, Oregon, on April 3, 1913. In 1934 he graduated from Oregon State College as the top student of his senior class with a major in chemical engineering, and in 1938 he received the Ph.D. in inorganic and physical chemistry from the University of Wisconsin. While at Wisconsin, he was awarded the Sigma Tau National Fellowship and the Du Pont Fellowship. He was an Instructor at Michigan State College from 1938-40 but in 1940 moved to the University of Illinois where he became an internationally recognized authority on the chemistry of the rare-earth elements, and published 94 research papers and books in in this area alone. Moeller moved to Arizona State University in 1969 as Chairman of the Department of Chemistry and served in this capacity until 1975. His performance as Department Chairman was equally commendable. George Peek, former Dean of Liberal Arts has written, "I fear that God doesn't make any more like Therald. His superb judgment, warmth and humor were a pillar of strength for me when I was Dean." Moeller retired from ASU as Professor Emeritus in 1983.

Therald Moeller is remembered by his students and colleagues for his winning personality, smile and good sense of humor; for his interest in them as individuals and for his sympathy for their

problems, both professional and personal; for demanding their use of correct English in all their writing; for superb judgment and helpful suggestions in his research seminars; for his open door policy even as Department Chairman; and for the firmness of his handshake. This writer is proud to have been his friend.

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