

## Reminiscence: Robert Sauer

Ph.D. 1962 (R. C. Fuson)

*"Did You Know? The first artificial sweetener was discovered in Noyes Lab by accident in 1939. Michael Sveda identified sodium cyclohexyl sulfamate while conducting experiments on organic aquo-ammono-sulfuric acid in Dr. Audrieth's laboratory." - Winter 2002 SCS Alumni News*

Robert Sauer had this to say in response:

While the few facts surrounding the discovery of sodium cyclohexyl sulfamate given in the two sentences are correct, there were some other stories about this event that were told during my days at Illinois. It was said that Sveda was smoking while working in the lab and laid the cigarette down on the edge of the bench, as many of us used to do. When he picked it up to take a "drag", he tasted the sweetness of a few crystals of the compound he had inadvertently laid it in and, thus, discovered the artificial sweetener. I think it should be pointed out that the probability of this discovery being made today is extremely small, given our political correctness: (1) smoking in the lab is probably no longer permitted; and (2) OSHA would certainly frown on smoking in the vicinity of chemical handling and an event such as a scientist tasting a chemical (which I hear Roger Adams, Speed Marvel and many others of the "Old Guard" routinely did) would now require an extensive investigation.

Please note this is partly "tongue in cheek", but if chemistry had been as strictly regulated in my earlier years as it is now, I have often wondered if I would have become an organic chemist.