In Memoriam

Ted Vermeulen

Chemical Engineering Professor Theodore Vermeulen died October 28, 1983, of complications resulting from Leukemia. He was 67.

He kept up work and friendships to the last, "proceeding full-blast when leukemia struck," according to a friend. His sister recalls Vermeulen dictating a letter to a former student a week before his death.

Vermeulen graduated with honors from the California Institute of Technology, where he was editor of the Cal Tech Yearbook and a member of Tau Beta Pi honor society. He obtained a master's degree in chemical engineering at Cal Tech and the first doctorate bestowed in chemistry at UCLA.

During World War II, he worked for the government at Shell Oil Co. in Emeryville and San Francisco in synthetics development. In February 1947 he was appointed to set up UC's chemical engineering department.

His wife says Vermeulen never meant to enter academia. Working at Shell, he had already turned down one university offer when he received a call from Wendell Latimer; "The job at Berkeley was a particular challenge. To develop a curriculum and faculty—it was something he couldn't resist."

Chemical Engineering Professor Donald Hanson said Vermeulen was vital in developing the department's atmosphere: "It was very convivial, very friendly. Small. I think, starting out that way, it remained that way." Chemical Engineering Department Chairman Alexis Bell agrees: "The spirit of collegiality which [Vermeulen] helped develop in our department continues to be one of our unique characteristics." Vermeulen fought to keep the department in the College of Chemistry despite pressure from the College of Engineering to move it there.

The prodigious quality as well as quantity of his work was well-recognized. The author of many professional papers and the chapter on absorption and ion exchanges in Perry's *Handbook for Chemical Engineers*, Dr. Vermeulen was the 1971 winner of AIChE's William H. Walker Award for outstanding research. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Belgium and France in 1953-54, and was a Guggenheim Fellow at Cambridge in 1964. In 1981 he was invited to lecture in China. He gave the annual Chemical Engineering Division Lectureship for the American Society for Engineering Education in 1978.

In a recent UC sketch of the chemical engineering department, Dr. Vermeulen noted it was his objective to build "bridges between theory and practice, bridges toward better understanding, bridges between chemical engineering and other areas of pure and applied science and with societal needs."

Although his most recent work focused on new methods for coal liquefaction, Dr. Vermeulin was credited with improving processes to desalinate and purify water.

College Dean C. Judson King, a chemical engineering professor for 21 years and a close friend of Vermeulen's, calls him "really *the* founder of the department. His research and scholarship pioneered and led the analysis and development of ion exchange and adsorption processes. He also established and explained the ways in which axial dispersion so substantially affects a number of important separation processes. . . . But we who knew him best will remember him most as a warm, giving, and extremely helpful person . . . an excellent and close friend . . . a willing and knowledgeable counselor. He genuinely cared for others, sensed their needs, and did his utmost to provide positive assistance to them."

He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Mary Dee Cole; two sons, Ray and Bruce; his father, Aurele; a sister, Lydiane, and three grandchildren.