

IN MEMORIAM

RAYMOND ABERNETHY 1894-1986

Knowledge of Raymond Abernethy's passing evokes mixed emotions in those who were fortunate enough to know him. We sorrow for his demise, but sing with joy because our minds are replete with so many pleasant memories. Ray gave generously of himself to others, and did so graciously and unobtrusively. Desirous of being fully informed—notebook in hand, Minolta at the ready—he probed for “What’s new?” and “How do you do it?” Then he would share his new knowledge with his associates.

A pioneer toxicologist on the American scene, Ray spent the greater portion of his more than four score years and ten initiating and developing one of the first forensic toxicology laboratories in the West. He invented many novel procedures which are beyond the ken of today's breed of instrument oriented colleagues. Consider the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of a presumptive test for ethanol which he devised using a cotton pledget which he saturated with blood and bunged into the top of a long test tube containing KMnO_4 in its tip!

Recognizing that the infrequent interchanges between toxicologists at the yearly meetings of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences were insufficient, Abbie encouraged the founding of The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT). To help in its organization, he requested annual leave to attend the 1963 TIAFT meeting in London. Refused permission, he promptly resigned and went to London at his own expense. There he contributed to the meeting and to TIAFT's birth. When he returned to the United States, Abbie's advice and accumulated wisdom were sought after by many laboratories. He responded in his usual competent and gentlemanly way, until he decided to retire from retirement just about four or five years ago. This only meant curtailing his activity and eliminating his modest fees. He continued to serve.

Formal recognition of Raymond's contributions was accorded him by the Gettler Award of the Toxicology Section of the American Academy of Forensic Toxicologists Section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, and by a recognition banquet held by the California Association of Toxicologists, of which he was a founding member. More rewarding than these formal accolades were everyone's respect and appreciation.

We are left with happy memories.

Ave atque Vale.