

Obituary

Dr Donald West Davidson



It is with deep regret that we record the death of Dr Don Davidson in Ottawa on 2 August 1986 at the age of sixty-one. At the time of his death, he was the head of the Colloid and Clathrate Section of the Division of Chemistry at the National Research Council in Ottawa.

Following a brilliant academic record at the University of New Brunswick, Imperial College, and Brown University, Don joined the staff of the Division of Applied Chemistry in 1953. Because of the relevance of some polar molecules to lubrication, he used his extensive background in the techniques and interpretation of dielectric measurements to initiate a

program on promising systems. The results shortly led him to a study of caged molecules or clathrates. Since about one third of the world's supply of natural gas is now believed to be held in hydrate cages, his choice of study was extremely pertinent to future energy supplies.

Although we in the 'Inclusion Community' will be most familiar with his pioneering and detailed studies of clathrate hydrates using dielectric relaxation and NMR techniques, he will be equally well known to other scientists for applying these two techniques to a variety of other systems.

On the personal side, Don was introverted, shy, and unassuming to an unusual degree. It took some time to learn that this characteristic masked an excellent wit, a keen sense of humor, a purist in English language usage, and an enthusiasm for bird watching. He contributed to the cultural side of the Division in several ways: one by organizing a local cleriheW contest. Although he disqualified himself, he wrote several of the 72 entries – a typical one follows:

Too many of these verses, I maintain,
Are not as Ed. Clerihew B. did ordain,
Their trite content and atrocious metre,
Would make a true poet on the brink of suicide, teeter.

Donald West Davidson, a thorough gentleman, scholar and friend was a great asset to the Division of Chemistry, and will be greatly missed by his colleagues and friends world wide. We are privileged and grateful for having known him.