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# IN MEMORIAM

# Alexander F. (''Jumbo'') Wells (1912–1994)

The following collection of papers is intended to honor the memory and scientific contributions of Alexander F. Wells, who passed away on November 28, 1994, after a long illness. Those of us who knew and interacted with Jumbo personally are deeply saddened by his absence; the profound intellect of Jumbo Wells was matched only by his personal kindness and generosity. I will never forget my first ''science conversation'' with Wells at his 18th century home in rural Connecticut. Although I was a neophyte graduate student at the time, this giant of structural inorganic chemistry spoke to me as if I was an intellectual peer in every sense (and fully understood every word he was saying!). An avid model builder, Wells' legacy at the Chemistry Department of the University of Connecticut included a structural laboratory uniquely equipped with thousands of components for constructing sphere-packing, network, polyhedral, and ball-and-stick types of models. An extensive series of accompanying model experiments had been created and iteratively refined over the years by other interested faculty in the Inorganic Division; graduate students in solid state chemistry had the privilege and duty to immerse themselves in these exercises as teaching assistants and graders—it was here that the principles of inorganic structural chemistry could be properly taught and truly appreciated, hands on. The walls of that wonderful learning place (and also Wells' attic at his home) were covered with shelves containing scores of his personal (and permanently glued) creations. Exposure to Wells' passion for the beauty of filling three-dimensional space in new ways was infectious. Exposure to Wells' profound musical talent as a classical pianist (compositions by Mozart were his favorites) was heavenly. Despite the incapacitating effects of a severe stroke in 1987, Jumbo continued his personal correspondence through his devoted daughter Janet, never missing a Christmas-time greeting, right up to the time of this death. He also enjoyed a close relationship with his son, Alex.

A. F. Wells obtained B.S. and M.A. degrees in chemistry from Oxford University; he continued his studies at Cambridge University, where he was awarded the Ph.D. and D.Sc. degrees. After completing a career at Imperial Chemical Industries (1944–1968) as director of the crystallographic laboratory, he accepted the position of Professor of Chemistry at the University of Connecticut, from which he retired in 1982. His monumental contributions to the field of solid state chemistry compose a good portion of its infrastructure. The first edition of *Structural Inorganic Chemistry*, published by Oxford University Press in 1945, was begun during the war years while Wells conducted research on luminescent phosphors at Birmingham University. Five editions of this classic text were eventually published, each carefully revised and personally typed by Wells on his three-stage ''Corona'' typewriter (first used on his Ph.D. thesis in 1937). The last edition, published in 1985, contains 1382 pages and scores of highly illustrative drawings—all personally prepared by Wells. This text will continue to influence solid state chemists for many generations to come; it serves as a faithful primary reference that is, for many practitioners, the first book to be consulted when a question of structure arises. Jumbo authored four other books (*The Third Dimension in Chemistry* (1956); *Models in Structural Inorganic Chemistry* (1970); *Three-Dimensional Nets and Polyhedra* (1977); *Further Studies of Three-Dimensional Nets* (1979)) in addition to many journal articles on crystal chemistry and education. He considered his more pedagogical works on structural principles and patterns as applied to chemistry to be his most substantial contributions to the field. Jumbo served as a charter member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Journal of Solid State Chemistry* from its inception.

Jumbo Wells will be sorely missed; however, his lasting contributions teaching us how atoms can and do fill three-dimensional space compose a living legacy that will continue to be frequently consulted and never too far from our thoughts as we go about our studies of the chemistry of the solid state.

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