

Sinclair Describes AOCS Symposium in New Hiawatha Poem¹

As H. M. Sinclair "glanced upon the crowd before him" at the recent AOCS Lipid Methodology Symposium—much as did Hiawatha in Sinclair's first sequel to Longfellow's immortal work [see *JAOCS* 40:(7) 7]—he frankly admitted that the thought of being identified more frequently with his poetic efforts than with his work in lipid chemistry was something he had not quite been able to face. "Leave well enough alone"

¹ Copyright 1964, H. M. Sinclair, Magdalen College, Oxford, England.

might have been the philosophy of the average man, but not he. To the contrary, he accepted the challenge to bring Hiawatha to life once more; and as the reader will soon whole-heartedly agree, he has solidly buttressed his growing image in the arts—if not in the sciences as well.

JAOCS offers this original publication of "Hiawatha's Insect Attractant" so that all might share the delightful experience of those who heard it first delivered at the AOCS Symposium.

Hiawatha's Insect Attractant

HUGH SINCLAIR

Should you ask me why this Congress
Of American Oil Chemists,
In State College, Pennsylvania,
Cross the Susquehanna River
And the Appalachian Mountains
In the Bellefonte County,
In a lovely rural campus
Far from human habitation
(Though inhabited by tigers—
Nittany, the football tigers),
Far from alcoholic liquid,
Meeting in a liquid phase there
Like the rain across the ocean,
Like the summer rain in England;
Should you (I repeat the question)
Ask me why fat chemists gather
In this dry-wet isolation
To discuss their lipid problems,
I should answer, I should tell you
(Thus to earn my bread and butter,
Like a wand'ring minstrel or a
Jester at a Royal palace)
Straightway in such words as follows.

From his office in Duarte
In the Arizona desert,
Big Chief Rouser, mighty chemist,
He the master of fat chemists,
On the summit of his building,
On an overloaded column,
Stood erect and called the chemists,
Lipid analysts, together.
From a window in his office
With his hand he broke a fragment,
Spread it with siliceic acid
Treated with some silver nitrate—
TLC he called this method—
Making plates like recent snowfalls,
Like the snow upon the prairies;
Chased the lipids up with solvents,
Propanol acetic acid
With some iso-octane added,
Chased them up with polar solvents
As the polar bears chase fishes;
Charred them with sulphuric acid,
Toluene sulphonic acid,
And observed the spots developed,
Looking like the black bear's
footprints,
Ursus niger (Linn.), the black bear.

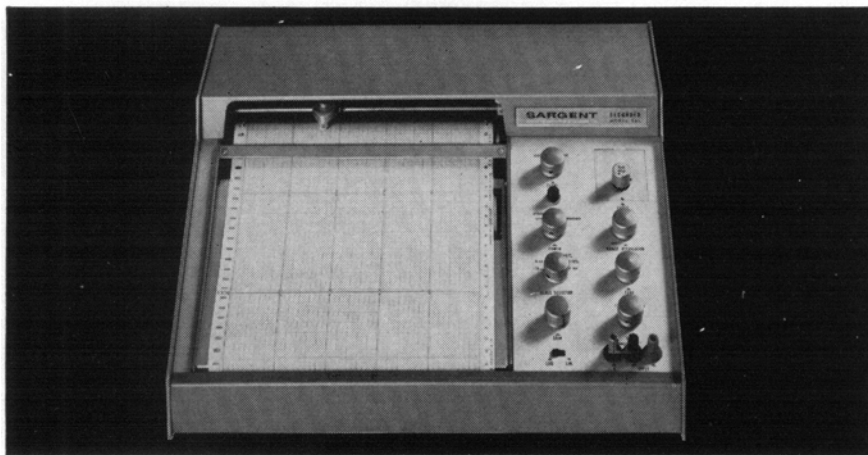
From a rack he took a glasstube,
Packed an Apiezon column,
ECNSS-dash-S with
Polyester stabilizer,
And injected then his lipids,
Giving with a flame detector
Spikes and humps upon the paper
Like the humps of New York skyline.
From a reed he made a pipestem,
Packed a DEAE column
As one packs a pipe for smoking:
Just the right amount of glasswool,
Just the right degree of pressure
From a broken rod to settle
Coarsest cellulose or fibre;
Then adsorbed the different lipids,
As the beaver's dam in winter
Traps the debris from the river.
And the solvent, slowly dripping
Through the DEAE column—
First a stream of strong acetic,
Methanol then in a mix with

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