

## Profile: James F. Mead

For those of you who haven't met him, James F. Mead, 1980 recipient of the Award in Lipid Chemistry, is a down-to-earth person who sincerely appreciates the recognition accorded his past accomplishments, but who obviously is more interested in the research challenges ahead.

His award acceptance lecture, described as "an elegant statement" by 1978 award recipient Ralph Holman, emphasizes future research. That address is on pages 393-397 of this *JAACS*.

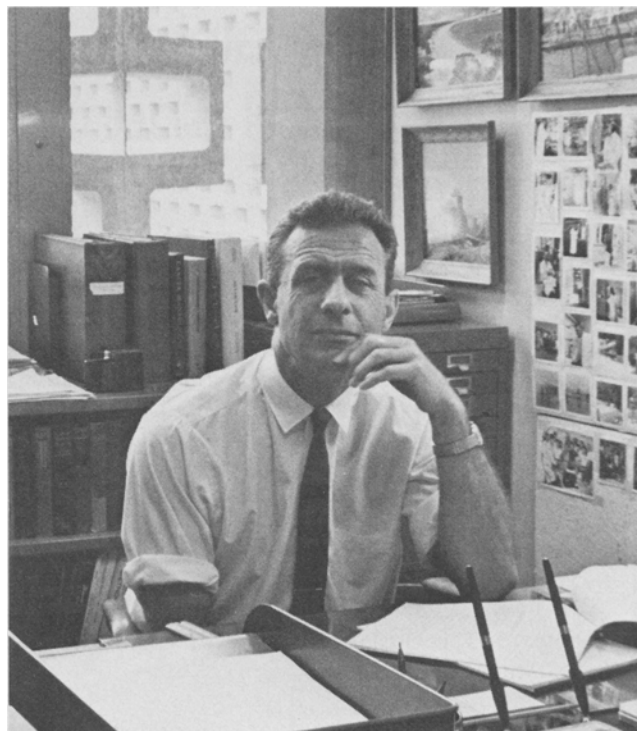
Mead is articulate, has a pleasant sense of humor and admits that a fondness for outdoor activities is one reason the Illinois native has made his home in California.

Mead was born in Evanston, Illinois, where his father was an executive with a bicycle firm founded by Mead's grandfather. When Mead was 3 years old, the family moved to Los Angeles where his father opened a branch of the firm. During his school years, there was another move to England and then back to Evanston where he was graduated from high school in 1934. Top quality schooling in England and Evanston, Mead says, more than adequately prepared him for Princeton, where he was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate in chemistry.

Why chemistry, or why science? Mead isn't sure how he became interested in science, but does recall a youthful, idealistic vision of himself as a benevolent, if despotic, master scientist enforcing world peace by blowing up anyone who wouldn't comply. By college age, however, his focus was on geology-archaeology. But his first college geology course was a disappointment that turned into disaster after the day he was expounding to a friend on the shortcomings of both the course and the professor. Unknown to Mead, the professor was standing on the other side of a hallway exhibit where he overheard every word. Exit geology; enter chemistry.

Faced with a choice between physical and organic chemistry, Mead didn't hesitate. "Lipids were easy to understand," he says, "I could look at the formula and grasp the properties."

Mead returned to California to do his doctoral work at California Institute of Technology. While a graduate student, he and about a dozen colleagues shared the \$45-a-month rent for a large house near Victoria Beach. It was there he met a second reason for staying in California—his future wife Marilyn (Denney) MacLennan. "Actually, I got a friend to pick her up," Mead says. "She was sunning on the beach, so we strolled down with a portable radio, then asked here to watch it for us while we went for a swim. We stayed away for a decent interval, then came back and struck up a conversation."



Denney let Jim know, as he was about to receive his doctorate in 1942, that she really wasn't keen on a prospective husband accepting job offers in the Midwest or East. The net result: they were married on May 22, 1942, and became permanent California residents. Their first daughter, Victoria, is named for the beach where they met. Robin is the second daughter and their son is James M., a dental student. The Meads have five grandchildren.

After World War II, Mead held an academic position at Occidental College, earning \$3,000 annually. He decided the situation wasn't too promising for a family man and began to consider alternatives.

At the same time, the Atomic Energy Commission was providing the initial funding for what eventually would become the UCLA medical school. The fledgling institution underwent a series of name changes, reflecting the major source of funds. Most recently Mead has been serving as associate director of the medical school's "Laboratory of Nuclear Medicine and Radiation Biology." That's a misnomer, Mead says, and he has to keep explaining there is nothing nuclear about the lab, nor is there any radiation biology work. With the prospect of future funding for membrane oxidation research from the relatively new

federal Department of Energy, the next title may be "Energy Science Laboratory," Mead says.

Whatever the name, Mead plans to cut down administrative and extracurricular involvements to have more time for research. "I'm sure some of my younger associates are just waiting to see the old man start fumbling at the lab bench," he says smiling. Mead's award acceptance lecture outlined his research interests, which include studying how linoleate is oxidized inside the human body. Mead decided a first step for in vivo experimentation would be to measure pentane in exhaled air. The first step was to establish what normal levels would be, so he sought healthy volunteers to breathe some old-fashioned air, with purity guaranteed as the air would be released from canisters. But, since the regular air in Los Angeles is laced with smog and other contaminants, the fresh air proposal had to be approved by a university committee that reviews all requests to use human volunteers, particularly those studies that involve ingesting a foreign substance. The proposal was approved.

Outside the lab, Mead enjoys various outdoor activities. The Meads divide their time between a mobile home on the beach in Laguna and their home in Pacific Palisades, rebuilt after total destruction by the brush fire of Oct. 23, 1978. "We managed to save a portrait of Jim's ancestor, General Mead (Revolutionary War), and our photographs, but that's about all," says Denney. For Mead, outdoor activities include volleyball, water skiing, snow skiing, tennis ("She's a better player," Jim says; "He hits harder," Denney says) and others, including bicycling 10 miles each day to his lab.

Mead's scientific contributions, his congeniality and his dedication to research are well known among his peers:

"Dr. Mead is a most friendly and cooperative person. He is extremely knowledgeable and his enthusiastic approach to research is contagious."

"Dr. Mead is one of the world's outstanding lipid biochemists and has been for at least the past twenty years."

"Permanent scientific contributions, which have been obtained by an admirable tenacity and ingenious experimental designs, characterize Dr. James Mead's academic life and productivity. More than 200 research papers, 16 books and contributions to books give evidence for this."

Mead has received previous awards and honors. He holds a Research Career Award from the National Institutes of Health. He is the sixth person to receive both the Alton E. Bailey Award and the Award in Lipid Chemistry. He was chairman for the 1977 FAO expert consultation on Dietary Fats and Oils in Human Nutrition held in Rome, and for other lipid conferences. He is a former member of the AOCS Governing Board.

Altogether, not bad for a would-be geologist turned chemist.

## Briefs

Henry W. Schimpfhauser, Jr., has been appointed general sales manager and Joe Nolan as food industry manager for Glyco Inc. . . . Charles H. Schmidt is now national accounts executive—Midwest region for Durkee Industrial Foods Group/SCM Corporation. . . . John G. Yorey has been named president of Alpine Aromatics International Inc. and Emil Buongiorno is executive vice-president and director of creative services. . . . Lewis G. Scharpf has been named a vice-president and worldwide technical director for International Flavors and Fragrances Inc.; Dr. Scharpf was

among the speakers during the 1977 World Conference on Soaps and Detergents in Montreux. . . . Otto Christensen has succeeded Carl Vrang as president of Grindsted Products A/S; Vrang officially retired Oct. 1, but will serve as a consultant and temporarily as working chairman for Grindsted Products subsidiary in the United States which recently began manufacturing emulsifiers at a new plant in Kansas. . . . Amerchol Corp., an affiliate of CPC International has announced changes in its sales force in which G. Frank de Monico has become sales director for the United States, Canada and Mexico; John F. King has become manager of technical sales, and Paul V. Posten has moved to Florida where he will be an Amerchol agent in that part of the United States.

## Berner in new post

David Berner is now laboratory director for and a partner in the General Testing Corporation of Rochester, New York, a firm specializing in water and wastewater testing. Berner is a past president of the Northeast Section of AOCS and was registration chairman for the ISF/AOCS World Congress. □

## Albert P. Sidaras

AOCS has been informed of the death during September of Albert P. Sidaras, a member of the society since 1976. Mr. Sidaras was manager of quality control for Welch Holme & Clark Co. Inc. in Harrison, New Jersey. Survivors include his wife and two sons.

## American Oil Chemists' Society



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