

## Profile: John Monick

Four decades ago, John Monick decided that a career in chemistry "would provide an interesting future." His 42 years helping Colgate Palmolive pioneer developments in the soap and detergent industry have validated his judgment.

"It (chemistry) is creative; you're always producing something new; and you can take pride in your work," he says. "I've always wanted to be doing something, not just sitting behind a desk. I want to be there to see a new plant go up, or see a new process go into production."

His academic and professional career is almost a prototype American success story.

He was born in 1917 on New York's lower East Side, about four years after his parents came to the United States. His father originally was from Russia; his mother was from Poland. "I had an all-around education in that teeming East Side, mixing with kids of all nationalities, that I don't think you could get anywhere else in the world," John says. Junior High School 64 and the local Boys' Club were both close to Tompkins Square park, providing ample opportunity for games, sports and socializing.

When he enrolled at Peter Stuyvesant High School, John already knew he wanted to take as many chemistry courses as he could. Although he was adept at physics and math also, experimenting with a chemistry kit while in junior high school had opened the world of chemistry to him. John did well in all his courses, and his grades earned one of the few available state scholarships, so he enrolled at the City College of New York as a chemical engineering major. He was graduated in 1938, No. 1 in his class at the age of 20.

But 1938 was a Depression year even for top scholars; jobs were scarce. A friend of his father knew of an opening for an analytical chemist at Colgate's facilities in New Jersey just across the Hudson River from New York City. Monick applied and was hired to analyze natural fats and oils and soaps in the firm's research department. He has been with Colgate ever since.

Several important events occurred to Monick during 1941. First, he transferred to Colgate's chemical engineering department, a step which opened up his future career. Second, World War II started and he was assigned to war-related research and thus did not enter military service. Third, at a dance on the lower East Side, where he was still living, John met a vivacious young lady named Lydia Chozianin. They both liked to dance; they had some mutual friends. The two were wed in 1944. Lydia is as outgoing as John is quiet.



"I guess I get engrossed in my science projects and concentrate on them," John says. "Lydia is very outspoken. In many ways, I have often wished I could be more like her."

Their first daughter, Dianne, was born while they were still living in New York. Now the mother of two children, Dianne lives in New Jersey near Philadelphia. John says she's relatively quiet. Their second daughter, Susan, was born in New Jersey and now is the main spark for a four-member female Blue Grass music group based in Nashville, Tennessee. She is more like Lydia, John says.

At the time they were first married, however, all that was far in the future. John was working at Colgate with other engineers to develop spray drying of natural soap and a practical method to produce laundry products in million-pound quantities. The result was Super Suds, a popular laundry soap after World War II. He also worked for a while with Martin H. Ittner in the original studies at Colgate on countercurrent, continuous high-pressure hydroly-

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sis of fats and oils. "We were somewhat the pioneer of the monoglyceride business in the United States," John says. He designed, supervised the installation of and was process chemist for a Colgate monoglyceride pilot plant in Jersey City that could produce up to one million pounds of product per year for the baking and lubricant industries. Demand from the baking industry quickly reached 10 million pounds per year and Colgate decided not to diversify in that direction.

The spray drying work on natural soaps proved even more successful after World War II, with petroleum-based detergents. Monick did development work on control of particle size and weight that was used to produce Colgate's first spray-dried detergent, Vel.

He also helped develop Gardol, a prefluoride-era toothpaste that used sodium-*n*-laurolysarcosinate as its anti-caries agent.

During this time, John had continued his evening studies while working full-time and raising a family. He had received his masters in 1945 from Brooklyn Poly Tech. Now that the family had moved to New Jersey, he was commuting evenings to New York City to pursue a doctorate at New York University, which he received in 1955. "That was 18 years from bachelor's degree to doctorate," John says. "I was the oldest graduate in my class." His parents, especially his mother, always had stressed the importance of education.

With Colgate's "Associated Products" group, Monick helped maintain and improve the quality of existing products as well as develop new ones. Individually packaged, moist paper towels were one development, as was Colgate's line of individual-sized personal care products for hotels. Institutional and industrial products also came from the group.

His definitive book, *Alcohols*, was published in 1968 and remains one of the standard volumes on the subject. He wrote articles on alcohols, phenols and ethers for the third edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*. He holds more than a dozen patents in the detergent and chemical fields. He has numerous scientific publications. His first publication in an AOCS journal was in *Oil and Soap* during 1946. That journal and AOCS methods first called the society to his attention. He became a member in 1949 and has been active in the Northeast Section since its founding. John was among the half-dozen or so persons who developed the ISF/AOCS World Congress sessions on soaps and detergents.

That took a major effort, for about 2 years ago John was told he has cancer. Colgate named him a senior research associate to relieve him of administrative duties and permit him to continue scientific work. "It's somewhat like a consulting position," he explains. "It gives you the freedom of selecting projects, making suggestions for research programs during the following year, but without the paperwork of being a section head."

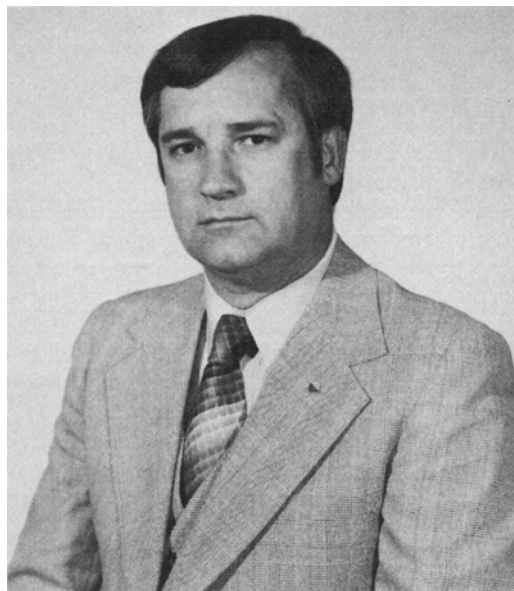
He felt well enough to deliver a paper, "The Chemistry of Alcohols," at the American Chemist Society's meeting in Houston earlier this year, but was not strong enough to attend the ISF/AOCS meeting. AOCS friends and associates have praised his courage and determination in facing the disease; Monick says his attitude toward his illness is primarily a result of his "stubbornness."

Looking back on his career in chemistry, Monick says if he were a young man facing a career decision today, he'd

still choose chemistry. As he says, "Important things are happening in chemistry. Once I had become interested in chemistry, I wasn't interested in anything else." □

## Mounts named to lead oilseed research

Timothy L. Mounts has been named Acting Chief, Oilseeds Crops Laboratory at the USDA's Northern Regional Research Center in Peoria, Illinois. The Oilseeds Crops Laboratory is known as the world's leader in soybean research, conducting diverse studies of soybean oil and edible soy protein.



Mounts

Mounts succeeds Herb Dutton, who is now able to devote full time to lab work. Dr. Dutton recently has begun directing a study of photosynthesis in soybeans.

Mounts has been employed at the Peoria lab for 23 years, most recently as Leader, Edible Oils Products and Processes Research Unit. He was technical program chairman of the AOCS short course "Processing and Quality Control of Fats and Oils" in 1978 at East Lansing, Michigan, and in 1980 at Lake Kiamesha, New York. He is a member of the AOCS Flavor Nomenclature Committee and Education Committee and a member of the Board of Governors, North Central Section, AOCS. Currently, Mr. Mounts is serving as a member of both the steering committee and program committee for the 1982 World Conference on Edible Oil Processing. He has over 50 publications in the field of fats and oils.

Tim lives in Peoria with his wife, Eileen, and three children, Peggy, Tim, Jr., and Julie, where he has been active in civic and church affairs and will serve as 1981 chairman, Peoria Section, ACS. □

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