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Publisher *Taylor & Francis*

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Journal of Liquid Chromatography & Related Technologies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713597273>

In Memoriam

Vern V. Berry

To cite this Article Berry, Vern V.(1990) 'In Memoriam', Journal of Liquid Chromatography & Related Technologies, 13: 13, 2513 – 2515

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/01483919008049051

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01483919008049051>

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IN MEMORIAM VERN V. BERRY, 1941-1990

On Friday, July 20th, Vern Vincent Berry, a well-known and valuable member of the chromatography community, passed away. In the following week, as word of Vern's death wended its way from friends to his students to his colleagues here and abroad, many of his acquaintances expressed their wish to contribute to a remembrance of Vern and to voice their appreciation of the very positive way he touched their lives. Their thoughts are collected here.

A collaborative tribute to Vern's life is really most fitting because Vern treasured friends and good hospitality. In particular, he both sought out and facilitated gatherings of chromatographers worldwide. One of his greatest pleasures was attending international conferences, not only for the primary purpose of keeping abreast of advances in the field, but also to exchange ideas and generate goodwill among scientists in this field. His research and his interest in international travel led him to collaborate with colleagues throughout the United States and in Germany, France, Belgium, Japan, China, Singapore and South Africa. Vern served on a number of conference organizational committees, including the recent HPLC'90 meeting and the upcoming International Symposium on Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Analysis.

The knowledge he gained from his travels and conference attendance was always shared in some form - in published reports of international meetings or, sometimes, at one of his creative social gatherings. Richard Shansky, a friend and colleague of Vern's, remembers many such pleasurable gatherings at Vern's house - a South African meal cooked entirely in his dining-room fireplace or taste-testing from his extensive collection of international liqueurs. One of Vern's greatest gifts, mentioned by all those who commemorate him here, was his humor and his thorough enjoyment of life. Who else but Vern would arrange lectures and a luncheon for the New England Academic Chemistry Conference at Parker Brothers Games - with the added bonus of free toys for all? "A most enjoyable and productive meeting," recalled Professor Ira Krull of the Barnett Institute.

Perhaps Vern's greatest legacy was his role as a communicator, a teacher, and a mentor. He wrote and published prodigiously - research papers, columns, book reviews, and, of course, meeting papers. Vern's timely synopses of research presented at international conferences have played a vital role in the rapid dissemination of scientific information in this field. The task of reviewing meetings in which hundreds of papers are presented is a formidable one. Vern's ability to select and condense the essential information from these

meetings has given researchers access to the latest studies months or years before the research is formally published in peer-reviewed journals. Anyone who has attended major chromatography meetings recalls the sound of Vern's laptop computer clacking in the front rows of the lecture halls.

Vern's excitement about the science of chromatography, its history, and its present-day leaders was contagious. In recent years, as professor at Salem State College, Massachusetts, and earlier as a chemist at Polaroid, he inspired both students and colleagues, often sheerly by his own enthusiasm, to pursue research in chromatography. He also very directly encouraged them to communicate with the professional community through publication, presentations, meeting attendance, and social gatherings of scientists. Preservation of the history of chromatography was a particular passion of Vern's, as evidenced by his involvement in documenting a verbal history of chromatography on tape and by his personal basement gallery of portraits, which comprises a virtual "who's who" of chromatography.

Vern's involvement in science began with undergraduate work in biology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Subsequent work as research chemist led him to pursue graduate work in analytical chemistry at Northeastern University (Boston, Massachusetts), where he received his doctoral degree in 1972 under the direction of Professor Barry Karger. Vern continued his research as a postdoctoral student at the University of Saarlandes in Saarbrücken, West Germany, under Professor I Halasz and Professor H. Engelhardt.

Professor Engelhardt remembers, "I seldom had a more unorthodox-thinking but more diligent chemist in my group. During his frequent travel through Europe, he occasionally dropped in at Saarbrücken, and we had enjoyable discussions on chromatography with an emphasis on the propagation of miniaturization of HPLC and SFC. At this time he always had a glass tube with him filled with liquid carbon dioxide, enjoying the liquid-to-gas transition in his hands."

Vern's research had a bent toward unconventional approaches to practical problems in chromatography and included such areas as new pump designs, new approaches to low-wavelength UV detection in reversed-phase and ion-pairing HPLC, new methods for gradient generation for micro-HPLC and the use of refractive index detection in gradient-elution chromatography. His nontraditional approach to research recently resulted in a Commonwealth of Massachusetts joint research grant, with Brian Bidlingmeyer of Waters, to develop a new concentrator of pollutants from water - research that, unfortunately, he was unable to complete. However, as Brian Bidlingmeyer put it, "Vern followed his dreams. He knew what he wanted and worked tirelessly to accomplish it." As Yvonne Fraticelli and other colleagues from Polaroid remarked, "He led a fuller life than most in the short time he was here. Vern Berry lives in the memory of all of us who had the privilege of sharing these great times with him. We hope that his creative and often nontraditional research in chromatography will be continued by the current and future scientific community."

The Vern V. Berry Memorial Foundation has been established to commemorate Vern's commitment to the communication of research in chromatography. The purpose of the fund is to grant an annual award for excellence in chromatography research by graduate students. The award will be made according to the judgement of an independent committee of scientists and will be presented at an annual international conference. Contributions can be made to the Vern V. Berry Foundation, c/o Austin Wentworth, 326 Reservoir Road, Boston, MA 02167, and are deductible for tax purposes.

To those who knew and appreciated Vern Berry as a teacher, a scientist, a communicator, and a friend, he will be sorely missed.

*Richard Shansky, Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
Ira S. Krull & Barry L. Karger, The Barnett Institute
Northeastern University
Yvonne Fraticelli, Ron Viavattene, and other
colleagues at Polaroid
Steven H. Wong, The Johns Hopkins University
Heinz Engelhardt, University of Saarlandes
Brian Bidlingmeyer, Waters Division of Millipore
Phyllis R. Brown, University of Rhode Island
Kari Hallenberg, LC Resources, Inc.
Betsy Hardinger and the past and present staff of LC-QC*

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