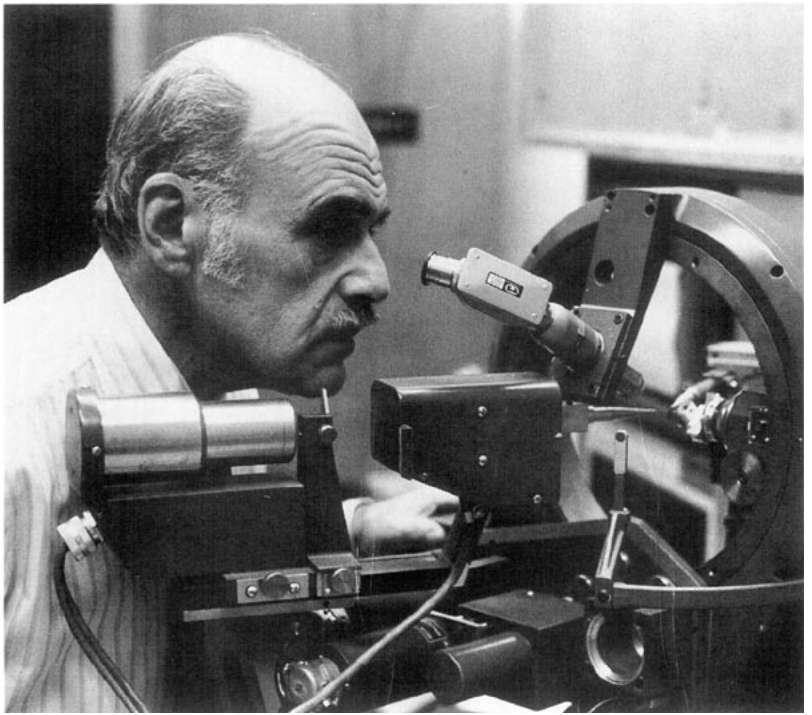

EPHRAIM BANKS
(1918–1993)

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IN MEMORIAM

Ephraim Banks (1918–1993)

Ephraim Banks died in his sleep on December 3, 1993. Although he had a heart condition for years, his death at the age of 75 was unexpected. For 44 years of his life he was a major player in the field of solid state chemistry and was active in research until the very last day that he lived.

He obtained a B.S. in chemistry from City College in 1937 and worked as a junior metallurgist in the New York Naval Shipyard during the war, from 1941 to 1946. He married Libby Kohl in 1945 and raised two sons, both of whom became scientists. His entire scientific career was spent at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn (now Polytechnic University), where he received a Ph.D. under the direction of Roland Ward in 1949. When Ward moved to the University of Connecticut, Banks took over the direction of the solid state chemistry laboratory, one of the few solid state chemistry centers in the world at the time. Over the years many Ph.D., masters, and undergraduate students who were trained in his laboratory went on to successful careers as the second generation of solid state chemists in this country.

Ephraim Banks had a fertile mind and many research interests. His major contributions and life-long interest were in the area of phosphors and energy transfer in rare-earth fluoride fluorescent and luminescent materials. He made equally important contributions in crystal chemistry, crystal growth, and magnetic and electronic properties of unusual/novel oxides, including the tungsten bronzes and transition metal oxides with unusual oxidation states.

I joined his group as a graduate student in 1964 and benefited greatly by his collaboration with Ben Post and I. Fankuchen, who headed a world-class X-ray laboratory in the physics department, as well as with Bruce McGarvey, who established a first-rate solid state ESR/NMR laboratory in chemistry. Professor Banks was very much a hands-off thesis advisor; we always had access to his insights and his abundant ideas about new directions in research, but he expected a great deal of initiative, originality, and independence from his students. Those of us who thrived in this environment were indeed well prepared to do research on our own.

His last years were saddened and made lonely by the death of his wife in 1985; but he was passionately involved in science to the very end. He will be missed at solid state chemistry conferences, where he was always sitting in the first row and would pop up promptly at the end of a talk to ask interesting, probing questions or to make thoughtful comments. His sudden loss is mourned by friends and colleagues.

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