

The Information Column

Journal of Chemical Education

- **Subscription Fulfillment:** new, gift, renewal, change of address: see Reader Inquiry Card
- **A Guide for Submissions:** see page 1006 of October 1996; also available from the Editorial Office by fax, email, or World Wide Web (JCE: Online)
- **JCE: Online:** <http://jchemed.chem.wisc.edu/>
- **Books and Other Publications:** see A200 of September 1996
- **JCE: Software** orders, information, A Guide for Submissions: see page 925 of October 1996

ACS Division of Chemical Education, Inc.

- **Membership Information, Officers, or Newsletter:** Jerry L. Sarquis, CHED Secretary, Department of Chemistry, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056; 513/529-2819; 513/529-5715 (Fax); jsarquis@miamiu.muohio.edu; <http://divched.chem.wisc.edu/divched/#top>.

Examinations Institute

- **ACS DivCHED Standardized Tests, Test Item Banks:** Examinations Institute, 223 Brackett Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634; 864-656-1249; 864/656-1250 (Fax); acsxm@clemson.edu; <http://tigerched.clemson.edu>.

Safety Guidelines

- **Minimum Safety Guidelines for Chemical Demonstrations:** Jerry L. Sarquis, see above.

Lists of Available Textbooks and Other Classroom Materials

- **Book Buyer's Guide:** a print resource in each September *Journal*; updates each March.
- **Chemical Education Resource Shelf:** an online resource (<http://www.umsl.edu/~chemist/books/index.html>) of JCE Internet, includes Index to Chemistry Textbooks in Print; has hyperlinks to publisher's sites; lists publisher's addresses.

Organizations

- **American Chemical Society:** 1155 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20036; 202/872-4600; <http://www.acs.org/>.
- **AAAS:** American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005; 202/326-6640; 202/371-9526 (Fax); <http://www.aaas.org/>.
- **NSTA:** 1840 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22201-3000; 800/722-NSTA; <http://www.nsta.org/>.
- **National Science Foundation:** 4201 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22230; 703/306-1234; <http://www.nsf.gov/>.
- **U.S. Department of Education:** Washington, DC 20202; 800/872-5327; <http://www.ed.gov/>.

Commentary

Hubert N. Alyea, 1903–1996

by Bassam Z. Shakhshiri

"To Hubert N. Alyea, an international grand master of lecture demonstrations and a delightful communicator of chemistry." These words describe only one of Hubert Alyea's magnificent contributions to chemistry and were used in the dedication of Volume 3 of *Chemical Demonstrations (1)*. Alyea's death on October 19, 1996, at the age of 93 at his home in Hightstown, New Jersey, brought sadness to teachers and to other people around the world who enjoyed his style of teaching and presenting chemistry. That style was often described in the press as "eccentric" and even "zany", but to those who knew him personally and who were lucky enough to be invited to his house or to his laboratory at Princeton, he was a warm and thoughtful person.

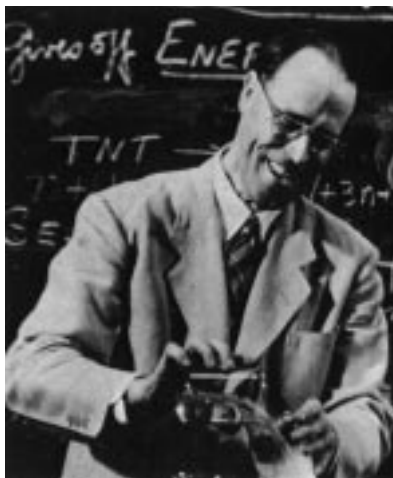
Hubert Alyea had a special gift for bringing chemistry to life in all his presentations. His fast pace, puns, and ad-libs characterized his teaching and his public presentations. He was purposefully dramatic and often appeared to be cavalier in his handling of chemicals and equipment. His clothing and hands always showed telltale signs of the experiments he did with gusto. It was all a masterful act—a successful one for his purposes. He was a showman who wanted to captivate his audience, and he did.

His fame as a chemistry professor was widespread among Princeton undergraduates. They would talk about him with great affection many years after graduation, even though they had not been students in his course. To the public at large he was the model for actor Fred MacMurray's character in Walt Disney's 1960 film *The Absent-Minded Professor*.

To teachers he was a mentor as well as a promotor of showmanship. His emphasis on displaying chemical changes led to the development of his TOPS (Tested Overhead Projection Series), which successfully enabled both teachers and students to see vivid chemical transformations. His "armchair chemistry experiments" approach is the forerunner of the current laboratory practices in microscale chemistry. He edited "Tested Demonstrations" and "Demonstration Abstracts" in this *Journal* for many years and provided readers with valuable directions and commentary for doing demonstrations. In 1970 he was the recipient of the ACS Award in Chemical Education, and his picture appeared on the cover of the September 1970 issue of the *Journal*. The photograph at the right also appeared in that issue and shows him in action—the way most of us remember him.

Hubert Alyea was born in 1903 in Clifton, New Jersey. He attended Princeton University where first he earned his bachelor's degree and then in 1928 received a Ph.D. in chemistry, after having done part of his doc-

Hubert Alyea had a special gift for bringing chemistry to life...



toral work at the Nobel Institute in Sweden. He received fellowships to the University of Minnesota and then to Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin where he worked with Fritz Haber. He returned to Princeton to teach, from 1930 to 1972. Upon retirement he continued to work unabatedly on the development of armchair experiments and was a popular lecturer at ACS, NSTA, and other professional meetings as well as at schools and colleges around the world. In 1986 I had the privilege and honor of being on stage with him at a Holiday Lecture at the Museum of Science in Boston. Even at age 83 he was a tough act to follow.

During the past 10 years we exchanged correspondence, usually around Christmas. When we spoke on the telephone, he always asked two things: "when is the next volume in the demonstration series coming out?" and "what do you plan to do in the next Christmas Lecture?"

Many people will want to celebrate Hubert Alyea's life and accomplishments. One way to do this would be to dedicate a special issue of the *Journal* to honoring the many facets of Hubert Alyea's chemical career. Another would be to organize symposia at ACS meetings or biennial conferences dedicated to advancing the ideas he promoted and the practices he initiated. If you want to pursue these suggestions, contact the Editor about a special *Journal* issue or the Program Chair of the Division of Chemical Education about a symposium. Among tributes to the memory of the giant who has left us is the dedication of my 1996 Christmas Lecture, as telecast on PBS, to Hubert Alyea.

Literature Cited

1. Shakhshiri, B. Z. *Chemical Demonstrations: A Handbook for Teachers of Chemistry*; University of Wisconsin: Madison, WI, 1989; Vol. 3.

Bassam Z. Shakhshiri teaches in the Department of Chemistry, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI 53706.