



6/18/2015

Message from the Editor:

If Dr. W. Norton Jones, who taught at McMurry from 1948 to 1976, was the cornerstone of the McMurry Chemistry Department, then Drs. Harris, Sonntag, and Klassen were the other members that laid the foundation for the excellent program that stretched from the 1960's into the 1990's and beyond. As we acknowledge the passing this year of Drs. Sonntag and Harris and look to mark the 40th anniversary of Dr. W. Norton Jones' death in May of 2016, the saying "history tends to repeat itself" seems to apply to McMurry University and the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry in particular. The department is once again in the midst of a period of stability in terms of faculty tenure and also in terms of excellence of our graduates. Each of the four current members of the department have been at McMurry a minimum of seven years and many of our recent graduates are finishing professional school, winning awards, and succeeding in their chosen profession. We couldn't be happier or more proud of their achievements. We also look forward to the next few years as faculty members pursue special projects on sabbaticals and to hopefully a growing enrollment. (If you know of any students who would be a good fit for McMurry, please put them in touch with us.)

Sincerely,
Dr. Edward Donnay
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The Department Remembers Dr. E. Lyndol Harris and Dr. Roy W. Sonntag

The department asked two longtime McMurry employees to write personal remembrances of Dr. Sonntag and Dr. Harris. Dr. Sonntag's remembrance was written by Dr. David Klassen who taught at McMurry from 1969 until 2006. Dr. Harris was remembered by his close friend Mr. Joe Specht, Director of Jay-Rollins Library from 1975-2007. It did not seem right to edit these stories to fit in this newsletter, so the remembrances appear in their entirety at our website www.mcm.edu/chemistry (under department history) with only short summaries of the official obituaries below. You are invited to read the material online and then post your own thoughts and comments about what these instructors meant to you during your time at McMurry.

Dr. Sonntag passed away on December 20, 2014, at the age of 85. He was a native of Cleburne, Texas. Roy received his undergraduate training at North Texas State University and completed his Ph.D. from the University of Texas, Austin. Initially he took a research position with ESSO in New Jersey, but eventually he pursued his passion for teaching and joined the faculty at McMurry in 1960. He retired after 36 years in 1996. In retirement Roy enjoyed his friends and playing golf as his health allowed. He was inducted into the Science and Math Wall of Honor by the Science and Math Advisory Board in November 2006.

Dr. Harris passed away on February 21, 2015, at the age of 81. He was a native of Busby, Texas. Lyndol was a 1956 graduate of McMurry who went on to receive his Ph.D. degree from LSU. He returned to McMurry in 1961 and taught for 33 years until retiring in 1994.

The families of both Dr. Harris and Dr. Sonntag asked that memorials be made to McMurry University. McMurry University is also embarking on a campaign to establish the W. Norton Jones Endowed Professorship to honor Dr. Jones and continue his legacy. For more information, please contact Debra Hulse, Vice-President for Advancement, at 325-793-4761 or hulse.debra@mcm.edu.

Alumni News:

Alumni who have passed away recently include Dr. D.G. Porterfield ('51), Dr. E. Lyndol Harris ('56), Dr. Wendell W. Hess ('57), Dr. Frank C. Lane ('60), and Dr. Paul Louis Fragua, Sr. ('66).

Dr. Thomas W. McAninch ('66) wrote us an email in June 2013 that was not included in the newsletter last year. He relayed the following story about his life after graduation from McMurry.

I worked a short time for Celanese Chemical in Corpus Christi before entering the U. S. Marine Corps as an infantry lieutenant in October, 1966. I spent the time between October, 1966 and January, 1970, on active duty in the US Marine Corps, including 1967-68 in Viet Nam. When I left active duty at the end of 1969, I entered the University of Texas at Austin, where I received a PhD in organic chemistry in August, 1974. My area of research was the synthesis of natural products. In August, 1974, I started employment with the chemical division of Eastman Kodak in Longview, Texas. I worked in R&D for five years and then moved into the environmental area. I retired from Eastman Chemical Company in September, 2004, as manager of the environmental laboratories. Since I had been involved in the development of the national environmental laboratory accreditation program since its inception in 1992, upon retirement, I began consulting with environmental labs and performing accreditation assessments for the States of Texas, Louisiana, and Illinois. In 2009, I added the Dept. of Defense to the list of agencies for whom I perform accreditation assessments. I continued my participation in the US Marine Corps, serving in the active reserve after leaving active duty, retiring as a colonel in July, 1995, as Chief-of-Staff, 4th Marine Division.

Mr. George Bernard ('73) sent an email after a newsletter was sent to his work address found through LinkedIn. After graduation from McMurry, Mr. Bernard got a job at Dow Chemical as an Inorganic Research Chemist /Laboratory Supervisor. From 1979-1996 he oversaw Dow's Freeport facility, supervising and directing manufacturing operations for magnesium chloride, magnesium electrolytic cells and magnesium casting facilities. From 1996-2004 he was a Work Process Leader, first as part of a Global Integrated Management System Team for the Freeport site and then as a Quality Assurance Leader. In the latter capacity he performed ISO and QS audits for both quality and environmental across Dow. Since 2007 Mr. Bernard has worked at Rmax directing manufacturing operations and managing Rmax's Dallas site facility. Rmax makes a PolyISO rigid foam insulation sold into commercial, residential and specialty markets. He writes, "I have been fortunate in my experience and my degree has provided me the opportunity to work with chemicals and lead and manage manufacturing plants for large and small companies...I find working with chemical manufacturing most satisfying and challenging."

Mr. Timothy Oglesby ('79) wrote to update us on his new address in Dallas.

You may have noticed in a recent issue of the Messenger (McMurry University's Alumni Magazine) that Dr. Jennifer Coddling ('06) is working on her postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University in Xinnan Wang's laboratory studying the role of mitochondrial motility in stroke.

Mr. Sean Smith ('06), his wife Courtney (Hendricks) Smith, and their two daughters visited the department on June 11, 2014. Sean studied at Duke Divinity School and served for a year as an assistant pastor in Amarillo. He is now the pastor in Claude, TX.

Mr. Brandon Randell ('10) stopped by the department last summer. He was then looking to begin his fifth year teaching high school science mostly at Cooper High School here in Abilene. He also is a laboratory instructor at Cisco College and was thinking about pursuing a Master's degree. This spring Brandon was honored by the Abilene Education Foundation as a Teacher of the Year at Cooper and as Science Teacher of the Year by Abilene ISD. The two awards came with cash prizes totaling \$1500. Congratulations Brandon!

Mr. Nathan Worley ('12) wrote that he has obtained his masters in healthcare administration from Trinity University in San Antonio. This opened an opportunity for him to gain a position within Tenet Healthcare's Leadership Development Program. Tenet placed him within Sierra Providence Health Network in 2014, and in January he was promoted to the role of Operations Manager. He says the role is proving very challenging and with a steep learning curve, but he relishes the opportunity to be a part of hospital leadership.

From Facebook, we noted that Ms. Allison White ('08) and Ms. Erica (Rawls) Wilson ('11) both recently received their Doctor of Pharmacy degrees from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Texas Tech University, respectively. Ms. Jennifer (Revell) Ramey ('10) finished a Doctor of Optometry degree from University of the Incarnate Word. Congratulations Dr. White, Dr. Wilson, and Dr. Ramey!

Also from Facebook, we noted that Ms. Katie Neal ('10) married Mr. Jon Pierce this May. Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Pierce!

Faculty members have run into recent graduates in Abilene. Brandon Copeland ('14) has taken a position at the City of Abilene Environmental Laboratory. Amanda Genzling ('13) and Bradley Rowland ('14) continue to work at Hendrick Medical Center. Joshua Brooks ('14) was seen on the McMurry campus at graduation to celebrate with friends. He informs us that he works 7 days on then 7 days off at his job at NALCO Champion.

The McMurry Science/Math Advisory Board (SMAB) sponsored the third annual golf tournament on May 2nd. The event was held at Mansfield National Golf Club. The golf event funds SMAB priorities such as:

- the Charles and Lisa Bloomer Research Stipend, a competitive award for students engaging in a supervised research project.
- Supporting student academic travel, as students present at and attend discipline specific conferences at the regional and national level.
- Providing academic support by contributing to the purchase of items such as specialized consumables; software and equipment; and helping meet expenses associated with field research.

If you would like to know more about this annual event or SMAB, you can find a link to their website on our webpage, www.mcm.edu/chemistry or contact the chair Elaine Harmon at elaine.d.harmon@gmail.com.

Departmental News:

The department is happy to introduce two new graduates: Chenny Nguyen and Arianna Salinas! Chenny and Arianna took quite a few classes together and shared the Outstanding Senior award this year. Chenny is originally from Vietnam and came to the US as a child. She has a young son and plans to seek a position in pharmaceutical sales. Arianna is from Round Rock, Texas and worked with the IT department on campus while going to school. She also did an internship at the City of Abilene Environmental Laboratory during her senior year.

The McMurry University Student Affiliates Chapter of the American Chemical Society (ACS) hosted 4th grade students from Jim Ned elementary during homecoming. This was the second year in a row that 4th grade students from Jim Ned were hosted by our chemistry club. What began as a simple chemistry show for the classmates of Dr. Pyenta's children has grown to a more substantial event. Last year's 4th graders (i.e. this year's 5th graders) were hosted by the rejuvenated biology club. Both sets of students participated in several science activities before or after visits to teepee village.

An agreement was finalized with the University of North Dakota (UND) that allows McMurry students to obtain an ABET-certified B.S. Degree in Chemical or Mechanical Engineering through mostly online courses from UND while obtaining a B.S. Degree in Chemistry

or Physics from McMurry University. Obtaining two bachelor's degrees simultaneously will take five years for a student to complete and students will have to spend one or two summer terms at UND taking engineering laboratory courses, but the agreement represents the first certified engineering program in Abilene. One current student is planning on taking the first online chemical engineering course this fall.

American Chemical Society (ACS) Science Coaches are chemistry professionals who share their expertise and enthusiasm for science with an elementary, middle, or high school teacher over the course of one school year. They enhance science education, and secure a \$500 donation for the school where they volunteer. Dr. Donnay worked as a Science Coach with the 5th grade McMagnet teacher, Ms. Sharlyn Bammel, to develop a CSI afterschool program for the gifted and talented students in her class. The students investigated unknown white powders, dusted for fingerprints, analyzed drinks for the amount of yellow food dye present, made casts of their footprints, and photo-documented a "murder" scene in the laboratory. The final project was to solve an art burglary and present the results to the public. Two chemistry club members served as the crime suspects.

Drs. Veltkamp and Pyenta applied for sabbaticals for this coming year with Dr. Veltkamp's leave occurring during the fall semester and Dr. Pyenta's in the spring 2016 term. Dr. Veltkamp has chosen to focus her scholarship in the area of chemical education and will be working on two projects. The first is examining ways to increase the rate of success in our general chemistry sequence. The second project is working with a colleague to disseminate materials from the ACS General Chemistry textbook in other formats, such as laboratory experiments and workshops. Previously Dr. Pyenta conducted his research in the biochemistry teaching laboratory during the summers, but this caused a major disruption every school year when his research needed to be "put away". His sabbatical will be used to restart his biochemistry research in lab space previously occupied by Dr. Veltkamp. The department is currently shuffling the locations of some equipment to make the space more useable for this type of research.

Departmental Research:

Drs. Donnay and Shin attended the 70th Southwest Regional Meeting (SWRM) of the ACS in Fort Worth from November 19-22 with a group of students. The chemistry club received support from the SMAB to help cover the cost of the trip. Senior honors biology major/chemistry minor Kara Black presented a poster about her work with Dr. Shin and Dr. Anna Saghatelian (biology) entitled "Antibacterial Activity and Chemistry of Five West Texas Plants." The work was made possible through a \$2000 grant from the Sam Taylor Foundation that Dr. Shin and Dr. Saghatelian received. Dr. Donnay organized a symposium "The Flexible Chemist: Teaching Outside of Your Specialty or Discipline" in the Chemical Education division. He gave a talk entitled "An Instructor Crams for a Year Long Organic Chemistry Test" about his experiences teaching organic chemistry when Dr. Shin was taking a leave of absence in 2013-14.

This summer the department has six undergraduate students conducting research on the Welch Foundation Departmental Grant, all of them part-time or for only part of the summer. Dr. Hyunshun Shin will work with 5 students: Daniel Kent, Lucy Rashiwala, Lizbet Miller, Dialfin Hammond, and Genna Hart. They will be working on projects targeting two enzymes: ornithine decarboxylase and histone deacetylase or working on the joint project with biology developing antibacterial compounds from West Texas plants. Dr. Edward Donnay will be supervising Armen Norman on a synthetic project to make a new ligand that may allow metal complexes to bind better to DNA than current ligands.

School and Miscellaneous News:

Old Main reopened last fall after years of renovation work. A ceremony was held at homecoming in October. The restoration of the auditorium is the part that gets the most attention, but our faculty colleagues enjoy their new offices and the classrooms throughout the building. They also enjoy the elevator and connection to the Cooke building. If you have not seen it, it is worth a campus visit; be sure to stop by the Chemistry Department and say hello.

Our faculty colleague, Rev. Bill Libby, donated his 140-acre ranch in Callahan County to McMurry University to be used as a field research station. While the biology department will likely use the field station the most, environmental chemistry classes may also conduct projects at the site. This donation happens to coincide with the biology department spearheading a proposal for an environmental science degree which contains a substantial amount of chemistry coursework.

Dr. James Hunt has been hired as the new Vice-President for Academic Affairs and began work on April 1st. He comes to McMurry University from Southwestern University in Georgetown where he served in a similar capacity. Dr. David Heringer was hired as the new Vice-President for Enrollment Management and began February 9th. He oversees the Registrar's Office, Student Affairs, Financial Aid, the Academic Enrichment Center, and the Office of Admissions. Both these leaders met with faculty and departments as they settled into their roles on campus. We are excited to hear their ideas for McMurry University going forward.

40 Years Ago in the Department

(Below are news items and excerpts from the department newsletter from May 1975. The entire newsletter can be seen under the "Department News" tab on our website, www.mcm.edu/chemistry)

"In late August, 1974, Dr. Jones returned to the campus after having enjoyed greatly his sabbatical leave of the Spring semester. Drs. Klassen and Sonntag have continued their research work under a joint grant from the Welch Foundation. ... Rod Fabian and Tom Headstream have served as student assistants in this program and have enjoyed appointments to Welch Scholarships in consequence."

"After serving as chairman of the McMurry chemistry department for 27 years, Dr. Jones will retire from the duties of that office on May 31 to devote himself to full-time teaching in the department. Dr. Roy Sonntag has been named to succeed to the chairmanship and will take over his new obligations on June 1."

McMurry student award winners were: freshman- Ms. Alice Ann Bledsoe, sophomore-Mr. Jim Thomas, junior-Mr. Roderic Fabian, senior-Mr. Robert Loyd. Tom Headstream won the John F. Conn Research Award offered annually by the Grand Chapter of Gamma Sigma Epsilon to the college student presenting the best paper on original research work. It included a \$75.00 prize.

"The college received a gift of \$23,000 from an anonymous donor for the purpose of building a greenhouse for the biology department. Construction should begin during the summer."

Alumni Search:

The following list contains the names of alumni for whom we have incomplete, incorrect, or no address. If you know the contact information for any of these alums, we welcome your sharing that information with us, or you might contact that person and ask him/her to contact us.

Jack Shultze '62

Gail Hart Long '64

Laurel Van Winkel '81

Mohamad Dareshori '63

Susan Arth '75