

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

RICHARD ANDREW OGG, JR. (1909 – 1962)

Richard Andrew Ogg, Jr., died at his home in Atherton on June 19, 1962, after a long and distinguished period of service to Stanford University, particularly to its Department of Chemistry. He leaves a widow and three children, as well as his mother, and to them our sympathies are extended.

Richard Ogg was born at Victor, Colorado in 1909 and entered Stanford as a freshman in 1925. He graduated with the degree of B.S. in chemistry with great distinction in 1929 and proceeded to the M.S. degree under the direction of Professor Francis Bergstrom in 1930. Ogg earned his doctor's degree under Professor Philip Leighton, studying the photochemical behavior of liquid ammonia systems, and in 1932 he went to work for a year with Professor Kistiakowsky at Harvard, as the holder of a National Research Fellowship. He spent the year of 1933 working in Polanyi's laboratory in Manchester, England, as an International Research Fellow in chemistry, during which time he studied the properties of reaction "flames" then being devised by Polanyi to study reactions in gases.

In 1934 Ogg returned to Stanford as an instructor, and he spent practically all of his teaching life here on the campus, attaining the rank of full professor in 1947. His researches led to the publication of more than one hundred papers. In an age in which specialization has become very pronounced, Ogg's publications represented an unusually wide variety of interests in physical chemistry. The two major areas with which he was concerned are reaction kinetics in gases and nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy. In the first of these, his best known contribution probably was the elucidation of the role of nitrogen trioxide in the decomposition of nitrogen pentoxide -- a study which cast much light on a problem which had plagued investigators in physical chemistry for decades -- while in the field of nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy Ogg was among the first to appreciate the significance of chemical shift in proton resonance and the applicability of this to the determination of structure in organic molecules. Also in this field, Ogg grasped the importance of spin-spin coupling and made elegant use of the effects in the study of very rapid chemical reactions.

Ogg was a lover of the outdoors. He skied extremely well, played tennis, rode horseback, and was an active member of the Sierra Club. In this latter activity he introduced many famous physical chemists to the delights -- and the rigors -- of the Sierra Nevada. As a person and as a chemist Ogg was an enthusiast. His was a mercurial temperament, and while his exuberance sometimes made demands on his colleagues' time, he was never dull. He had an unusually sensitive appreciation of verse; he possessed a remarkable memory and could recall entire poems without effort; and he was an accomplished linguist. Ogg's infectious enthusiasm for chemistry will be greatly missed, not only at Stanford, but also in the many European laboratories that he frequently visited and in which he had a very large circle of friends.

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