

Research lab to be named after professor, wife

By Sarah Eisenhauer
Alligator Writer

Only 7,000 students attended UF in the Fall of 1946, the year Professor George Butler began his work in the chemistry department.

Gainesville was a significantly smaller city then, and because Butler was not a veteran of World War II, he and his wife Josephine could not even find a place to live.

"We finally found a place through friends, but we still could not buy a refrigerator or new stove," he said.

In the past 50 years, Butler watched Gainesville and UF almost quadruple in size. And in that time, the Butlers' situation in Gainesville has changed drastically.

Butler, 80, has worked in the UF chemistry department for one-

third of the university's existence. On Friday and Saturday, his work will be honored when the polymer chemical research labs in Leigh Hall and the Chemical Research Building will be dedicated as "The George and Josephine Butler Polymer Research Laboratory."

Butler said UF has made tremendous progress since he began working here, especially concerning competition between other

universities.

"I feel that we in the chemistry department had a part in that," he said.

One reason Butler has remained at UF throughout the years is because the school has "a lenient policy toward people who want to work hard" that gave him a reasonable teaching load so he could have time to research.

He also said UF is very supportive of graduate-level education.

"The most important teaching is one-on-one at the graduate level, because that is where you deal with the future chemistry professors and practitioners," he said.

Butler was the only polymer chemist at UF until 1972. He said there were times when he considered leaving the university because of offers from other places, but nothing ever appealed to him quite as much as UF.

Ken Wagener, a UF chemistry professor and director for the Center for Macromolecular Science and Engineering that Butler established, said finding a person who has not changed jobs several times is extremely rare.

"Very few people last 50 years in the same place," Wagener said. "He must derive great satisfaction from being here all these years."

Wagener has worked with Butler for about 13 years, which includes time as one of Butler's graduate students.

"I am one of 200 people he has influenced in graduate education," Wagener said. "George Butler's accomplishments are unique ... and his contributions are just enormous."

Butler is considered a national pioneer in teaching polymer chemistry, and more than 3,000 references have been made to his research. He has authored four books, edited 17 books and contributed chapters to 14 others.

Butler also has lectured in 30 countries, and still has two post-doctoral students.

He has been a leading fund raiser at UF by raising support for

research from a long list of agencies, including the Department of Energy, Office of Naval Research and the Atomic Energy Commission.

"I have completely lost track of the total dollar value of the grants," Butler said. "I didn't consider that an important aspect."

Thousands of jobs in the city of Gainesville were created through the Peninsular Chemical Research company that Butler co-founded.

"Everyone who has had the good circumstance to work with him knows that he is a very people-oriented person," Wagener said.

Wagener described Butler as a quiet, unassuming and family-oriented person.

"He rarely says a harsh word about anything," Wagener said.

UF chemistry professor William Dolbier said Butler is a delight to work with, and that Butler is probably most well-known for his research in cyclopolymerization, which Butler "practically invented."

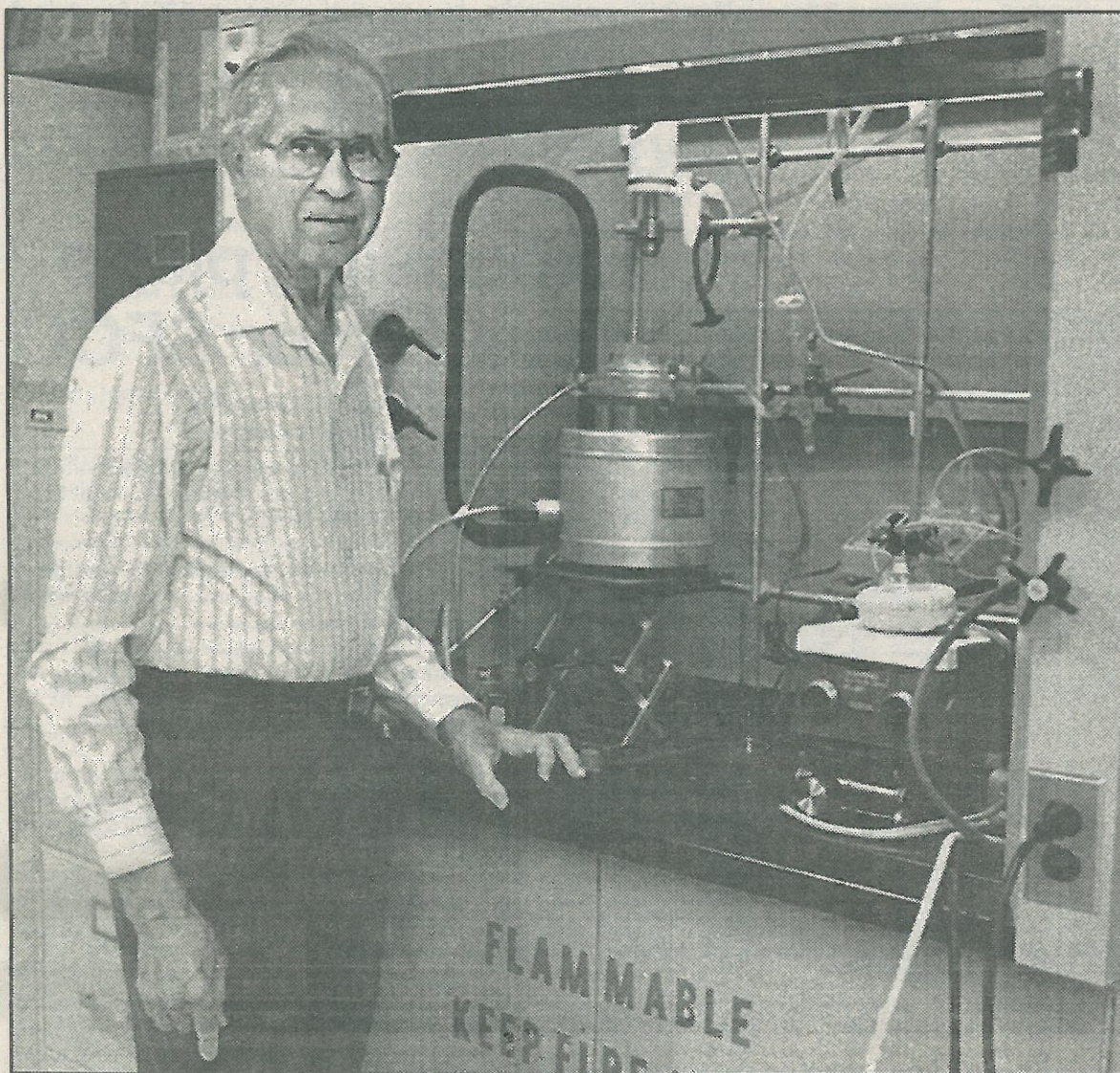
UF Vice Provost Gene Hemp called Butler "a wonderfully dedicated faculty member who is generous with his time and intelligence."

Butler's accomplishments have not made him arrogant, said Lorraine Williams, who has been Butler's secretary for 12 years. She said he is a very humble person who demonstrated this aspect of his personality when he said he was "a little bit embarrassed but very pleased" to have the labs dedicated to him and his wife.

Williams said both George and Josephine Butler have always shown a great deal of interest in his students' grades and personal life.

"Josephine has been his right arm. She attends scientific meetings with him and hosts parties at their house for the students," Williams said.

Butler said he and Josephine go out of their way for his students in order to increase the competition among the students.



JEN FRIEDBERG — ALLIGATOR STAFF

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