



## IN MEMORIAM HERMAN SKOLNIK (1914–1994)

Herman Skolnik, the founder of the *Journal of Chemical Information and Computer Sciences* and its first Editor, passed away at the age of 80 on December 29, 1994. He received a B.S. degree in chemical engineering from Pennsylvania State University in 1937 and an M.S. degree and a Ph.D. degree in physical organic chemistry from the University of Pennsylvania in 1941 and 1943, respectively. In 1942, he joined Hercules Incorporated at Wilmington, DE, and in 1952 was appointed research manager of its Technical Information Division, the position he held until his retirement in 1979. In the years that followed he remained active in the chemical profession, writing, lecturing, and teaching.

Herman was associated with the ACS Division of Chemical Information from its very beginning. As soon as the Division (then Division of Chemical Literature) was formed in 1948, its members recognized the need for a forum for publication, namely a new ACS journal devoted to papers on chemical documentation. In 1957, Herman was appointed the chairman of the Divisional Journal Study Committee, whose efforts culminated in the creation in 1961 of the *ACS Journal of Chemical Documentation* (renamed in 1975 as the *Journal of Chemical Information and Computer Sciences*). Herman became its first Editor and served in that capacity till 1982.

In his first editorial in issue no. 1 of volume 1, he remarked jokingly that he had been writing it for four years, because this was how long it took to launch a new journal. It was his "objective for the journal to be the forum for a continuing body of literature which contributes to the art of science of

chemical documentation and to its understanding and advancement".

The editorials that Herman wrote in the succeeding years amply illustrate his interests and concerns about a variety of issues extending far beyond the objectives for the *Journal*. His keen sense of history, his concerns about the quality of research and of reports thereon, his promotion of education, and his views on the chemical profession and on chemical information science in particular are reflected in such editorials as

- "Education for Chemical Documentation" (Oct 1961)
- "Information and Knowledge" (July 1962)
- "Universal Metrology" (Nov 1965)
- "Brain versus Computer" (May 1966)
- "Scientific Journals—Whither or Wither?" (Nov 1968)
- "Professional Pattern in Chemistry" (Aug 1969)
- "A Plea for Meetings of Quality" (Aug 1970)
- "Unemployment Is a Problem" (May 1972)
- "A Look at Philosophers Looking at Technology" (Aug 1975)
- "The Changing Nature of Chemical Information Science" (Nov 1975)
- "Chemistry Two Centuries Ago" (Aug 1978)
- "Chemicals on Trial" (Aug 1980)
- "Innovation and Productivity" (May 1981)
- "Learning for Life" (Nov 1981)

In his last editorial in 1982, Herman reviewed his 21.5 years as the editor of the *Journal*. He read, evaluated, processed through reviewers, reread, and edited well over

2000 papers, of which over 1200 were published in the 85 issues for which he was responsible. He discussed how the content of the *Journal* had been changing over these two decades: papers from the industrial sector versus those from the academic world, chemical information science papers versus computer science papers, and national versus international participation. It is to his credit that he moved with the trends as the field moved from "chemical literature" to "chemical documentation" to "chemical information science", incorporating "computer science".

It was no coincidence that in 1975, when the ACS Division of Chemical Literature changed its name to the ACS Division of Chemical Information, the *Journal* changed its name to the *Journal of Chemical Information and Computer Sciences* to provide also a forum for publication of papers presented before the new (formed in 1974) ACS Division of Computers in Chemistry.

The *Journal*, of course, has never been formally an official organ of any ACS Division, and Herman from the very beginning published papers with no association with any scientific meeting and many papers from outside the U.S. Clearly, the journal has gained early an international status as a prime journal in chemical information science.

A few of his other most enduring contributions to the history of chemistry, to chemical documentation, and to chemical information theory, practice, and profession should be highlighted.

Herman was associated with *Chemical Abstracts* for over 47 years, starting as a volunteer abstractor in 1947, and continuing since 1959 as the section editor (later as section advisor) for the CA Section "Terpenes and Terpenoids".

In 1966, Herman, in his capacity as the chairman of the Publications Committee of the ACS Division of Chemical Literature, was instrumental in creating with two other professional organizations, American Documentation Institute (later American Society for Information Science) and Special Libraries Association, a joint publication, *Documentation Abstracts* (renamed in 1969 as *Information Science Abstracts*). Herman was the first chairman of the Board of Directors of Documentation Abstracts, Inc.

In 1969, Herman was the recipient of the Patterson Award of the ACS Dayton Local Section to acknowledge his meritorious contributions in the field of chemical literature, especially in the documentation of chemistry.

In 1976, he was the chairman of the Board of Editors for the ACS Centennial History and published an ACS history, "A Century of Chemistry—The Role of Chemists and the American Chemical Society". For the 100th Anniversary celebration on April 6, 1976, he submitted a message subsequently sealed in a time capsule in the wall of the New York University (to be opened on April 6, 2076!), in which he related the advances in chemical information science, computer science, and telecommunications, enumerating at

the same time some weak links and unsolved problems and suggesting further exploration of the fundamental issues.

In the same jubilee year, the ACS Division of Chemical Information established an Award to recognize outstanding contributions to and achievements in the theory and practice of chemical information science and named it as the Herman Skolnik Award in honor of its first recipient. This coveted award, consisting of a \$2000 honorarium and a plaque, is awarded annually to scientists who, in view of the chemical information community, have made major contributions to the science of chemical information. From its inception, it has always been awarded to leaders in the field.

His activities within the ACS were legion: cofounder, chairman, symposia organizer, speaker, historian, and consultant for the ACS Division of Chemical Information, chairman of the ACS Delaware Local Section, cofounder of the Delaware Valley ACS Chemical Literature Group, editor of *DEL-CHEM Bulletin*, organizer of the ACS Middle Atlantic Regional Meetings, an ACS Local Section Tour Speaker, and a member of the ACS Committee on Nomenclature and of numerous other ACS Committees. All in all, he presented over 100 papers, chaired many symposia for 10 ACS Divisions, and authored four books and over 200 papers in some 20 scientific journals. He did say once: "I have been infected early in life with the itch to write".

In the *Journal*, his first paper on "Chemical Indexing: Management's Point of View" was published in 1961, and his last on "The Journal for Chemical Information and Computer Scientists: A 25-year Perspective" in 1985 on the occasion of the *Journal's* silver anniversary.

In 1982, he published an excellent book on "The Literature Matrix of Chemistry (A Guide To Using Literature Resources of Chemistry and Chemical Technology)", in which he not only pointed out the importance of using old traditional printed resources but also guided the readers in the use of modern online databases.

Announcing his retirement he said in a 1979 editorial: "I view retirement from Hercules as an opportunity for another challenge." He was true to his word. He was active in teaching and promoting science education in public schools, activities for which he received the Delaware Governor's Outstanding Volunteer Award in 1988. He also founded and guided ChemVets, an organization for retired chemists with the purpose of helping high schools teachers by providing expert advice and holding talks on science careers for students, in addition to direct involvement in the classroom.

Herman Skolnik, the scientist, innovator, philosopher, teacher, historian, editor, author, consultant, and mentor to many of us over the past five decades, will be missed.

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CI9503826