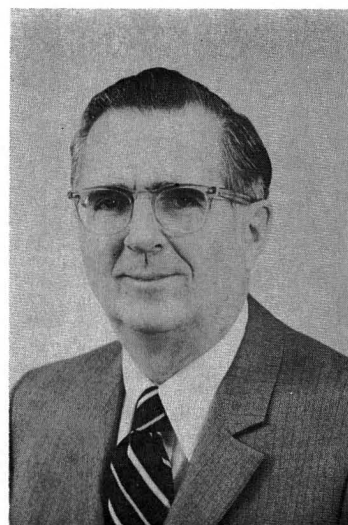


In Memoriam

WILLIAM H. CORCORAN

William H. Corcoran, 62, Institute Professor of Chemical Engineering at the California Institute of Technology, died while vacationing in Hawaii on Saturday, August 21, 1982. Bill is survived by his wife of nearly 40 years, Martha, son Will Corcoran, Jr. and daughter, Sally Corcoran Fisher, and six grandchildren. To describe the accomplishments and contributions of Bill Corcoran to chemical engineering, engineering education, and to his friends and colleagues would require many, many pages. During his life, Bill Corcoran attained virtually every honor and recognition available to an engineering educator, while, at the same time, truly touching the hearts and minds of all those with whom he came in contact. Ironically, two weeks before his untimely death, Bill Corcoran prepared a short essay entitled "My Career as a Chemical Engineer." As a tribute to Bill Corcoran we now reprint that essay:



My Career as a Chemical Engineer

My professional work began before World War II as an employee of Cutter Laboratories in Berkeley, California. Here my interest in pharmaceuticals and biomedical engineering was sharpened and never left me. In World War II I was involved with a very excellent group of people at the California Institute of Technology. We were responsible for the work on processing of double-base propellant and interior ballistics of all rocket motors used by the Navy. One year of that program also concurrently dealt with ordnance work on the atomic bomb. The rocket program was very successful, and in my very biased opinion it contributed in a major way to the quality of our munitions program in World War II.

Subsequent to World War II I went back to graduate school, courtesy of the National Research Council. I have never forgotten the nice fellowships they afforded me, and today I have an association with the National Research Council by way of its Commission on Engineering and Technical Systems. That is a pleasure and allows me to partially pay back the debt I owe them. After receiving my Ph.D. degree in 1948, I returned to Cutter Laboratories in Berkeley where for four years I was Director of Technical Development. The work included process development on pharmaceuticals and biologicals, including fermentation studies on penicillin and deep-culture growth of useful organisms for manufacture of vaccines. In addition we did significant work on disposable medical equipment and mass parenteral solutions. My interest in biomedical and bioengineering was further intensified by that experience.

In 1952 I returned to the California Institute of Technology as an Associate Professor of Chemical Engineering and except for a two-year period from 1957 to 1959 I have been associated with the California Institute of Technology ever since. In the period of 1957 to 1959 I was Vice President and Scientific Director for Don Baxter

Incorporated, a subsidiary of the American Hospital Supply Corporation. Here my biomedical work continued.

My work at Caltech in research has related to studies of nitric acid-nitrogen dioxide-water systems, pyrolysis of hydrocarbons, flow systems, including work on artificial heart valves, and desulfurization and supercritical extraction of coal.

Teaching has been a major interest during my professional career, and I have especially enjoyed the teaching of my Senior design course entitled "Optimal Design of Chemical Systems." I have learned so much in the teaching of the course that I can hardly believe what has happened, and I do have some hopes that the students learned at the same time. In terms of breadth of opportunity for a professor I can't think of a course more designed for a professor's development.

In other professional activities I spent 10 years as Vice President for Institute Relations at the California Institute of Technology while still maintaining my programs of teaching and research. In 1978 I had the privilege of being President of AIChE. Currently I have the pleasure of working with the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology and will be the President for a two-year term ending in 1984.

Along the way I have had the great fortune to act as a consultant for the American Hospital Supply Corporation and the Bechtel Corporation and as a Director of Superior Farming, the KTI Corporation, and Phytogen, Incorporated, a genetic engineering firm. There has not been one dull second. If I had my life to relive, I would do exactly what I had done previously and probably would make the same mistakes. Hopefully not. It has been a great life, with thanks to all the people with whom I have associated but with special thanks to my wife Martha who understood from time zero the nature of the profession and has been a very interested observer and participant in my professional activities.