

Chemical Microscopy Lives on at Cornell

Readers of *The Microscope* and people familiar with McCrone may think that Chicago-based McCrone Research Institute (McRI) was the first school in the United States to teach organized courses in microscopy. It was not. That distinction goes to Cornell University, which is also one of the first in the *world* to offer microscopy instruction, beginning in 1890. Walter McCrone attended Cornell University and, under the guidance of Professor Émile Monnin Chamot, completed his undergraduate degree in chemistry in 1938 and his Ph.D. in chemical microscopy in 1942. Dr. McCrone left Cornell in 1948 and incorporated McCrone Research Institute in 1960, later dedicating the laboratories and building in Chicago to Chamot.

Cornell didn't give up its microscopy courses until after Professor George Cocks left for Los Alamos in 1980. Microscopy at Cornell had been in a steady decline since Dr. Clyde Mason's retirement in 1965. Dr. McCrone said, "It would not be too far off the mark to say microscopy at Cornell declined from 1946, when Mason moved the lab to Chemical Engineering, because of his interest in metallurgy and metallography." In any case, during the period between 1980 and 1984, only mineralogy courses in geology kept chemical microscopy alive as they took over the microscopy lab. Led by Dr. McCrone, microscopists such as Ted Rochow, Francis Jones and Fran Rosevear wrote letters to the Cornell deans urging them to reinstate microscopy in the curriculum. Finally, the chemistry department said, "OK, if you can reactivate microscopy at Cornell, go to it."

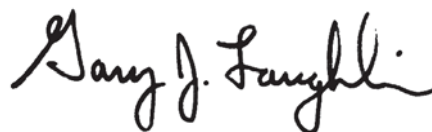
Dr. McCrone returned to Cornell to teach his one-week Chemical Microscopy course. The session in January 16-20, 1984, drew 50 applicants from nearly all the university's colleges; 27 students, most of them graduate students and university staff, took the intensive one-week course. It ran in borrowed space with borrowed equipment. Dr. McCrone was on a mission to return chemical microscopy to its birthplace, and it quickly turned into an annual summer event. He donated his time and other resources to the course and secured a dozen custom-built microscopes for the cre-

ation of a dedicated facility in Cornell's Baker Laboratory. From this location, he reintroduced chemical microscopy into undergraduate and graduate courses in Chemistry (now Chemistry and Chemical Biology), Textiles and Apparel (now Fiber Science and Apparel Design), City and Regional Planning, and Design and Environmental Analysis.

In the 1990s, Dr. McCrone and his wife Lucy made possible the full endowment of the Chamot Professorship at Cornell University. Together, they continued to teach the summer courses until shortly before Dr. McCrone's death in 2001. David Stoney succeeded him, and today, McRI President Gary Laughlin travels to Cornell each summer to teach Chemical Microscopy. McRI continues to donate time and resources to the Cornell community by offering Chemical Microscopy and more-specialized courses in fiber science and apparel design.

The chemistry course attracted as many as 36 students, but by 2005, enrollment had to be limited to 18, due primarily to the variety of aging microscopes. The Cornell Microscopy and Imaging Facility recognized the need for a new set of modern teaching-grade PLMs and asked for the support of Dr. Fran Rosevear, one of Cornell's early microscopists and founders of the facility. Fran, already in his 90s, graciously donated 13 LEICA microscopes. In 2008, he gave the school six more microscopes, which allowed the facility to meet its current classroom needs.

I am sad to say that Fran Rosevear passed away on July 5, 2010 at age 97. Through his generosity and lifelong interest in chemical microscopy, it lives on in its birthplace — Cornell University. Read Dr. Rosevear's obituary on page 135.



Gary J. Laughlin, Editor