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## erfect to a T

For chemistry professor Oswald Tee, the most important bonds were with his students



Andrew Dobrowolsky

Tee: strong ties to students

Charles Berks says he will never forget when he first met Dr. Oswald Tee, one of Concordia University's preeminent chemistry professors. It was 1975 and Berks, all of 23 years old, was about to embark upon his Master's degree in chemistry under Tee's tutelage.

"He was so dynamic and he presented his work in such an exciting way that it was kind of infectious," said Berks, who would study under Tee for eight years. "He was the sort of professor who would come into the lab every morning to see how everyone was doing. He took a great interest in the work of all of his students."

And that interest often extended beyond the bounds of chemistry. When Berks announced that he was going to marry Rani Iyengar, another of Tee's graduate students, the professor insisted that the couple hold the wedding reception in his own backyard.

"That's just the way he was," says Berks, now a CEGEP chemistry professor at John Abbott College. "He treated his students very well, and not only in terms of chemistry."

Berks is certainly not alone in his praise of Tee, who retired from full-time duties in June of 2000, following a 30-year teaching and research career at Concordia. Since announcing his retirement, Tee has been saluted both for his notable contributions to the field of organic chemistry, as well as for his dynamic approach to teaching and the keen interest he took in the work of each of his students.

*Arkat USA*, which publishes chemistry journals on the Internet, released a special newsletter commemorating Tee's career, and last November's annual Ontario-Quebec Physical-Organic mini-symposium was held in Tee's honour. Concordia University has also bestowed upon Tee the status of Professor Emeritus, an honour reserved for the University's most-respected retired faculty members.

Tee, well-known for his modesty, appears slightly uncomfortable with the deluge of tributes and he offers little more than a shrug when he is asked to explain his popularity.

"I guess I haven't upset too many people over the years," he says.

A native of England, Tee first came to Canada to pursue graduate work at McMaster University in Hamilton. He joined the faculty of Concordia (then Sir George Williams University) as an Assistant Professor in 1970. As a researcher, he was primarily concerned with the mechanics behind chemical reactions – how they take place and why catalysis can speed up certain reactions. It was research that could be applied to an assortment of fields and applications, and even today Tee says he receives phone calls and e-mails about work he completed long ago.

"Sometimes, it is work that I may have already forgotten about," he says, "but somebody out there is trying to make use of my research in a particular context. It speaks to the whole nature of knowledge."

Tee was also a pioneer in the use of computers, relying on computer

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## Global reach

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the 1990s – that figure jumped substantially beginning in September of 2000, when the provincial Ministry of Education introduced a program to help defray the overseas living expenses of Quebec exchange students.

Quebec residents who take part in university exchange programs are now eligible to receive up to \$1,000 a month for up to eight months. Since that announcement, the number of Concordia students taking part in exchange programs has risen threefold.

While abroad, students receive full credit for their course work and many, like Anoaia, also embark upon additional field work in order to supplement their studies.

“The goal is to ensure that this is not merely a form of academic tourism,” says Francis. “We want our students to get a real study opportunity abroad and gain an invaluable international experience.” **P**

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technology to help him collect and analyze data long before it became a normal procedure. As a result, he says, he was able to conduct more efficient experiments and achieve more accurate results.

But of all of his accomplishments, Tee says he is most proud of the efforts he made in the classroom, where he helped a new generation of scientists grasp the principles of chemistry and forge their own careers.

“You can’t possibly teach a student everything in the time that is available,” he said. “What I always tried to do in my courses was give the students certain basics and a way to look at problems, so that they would be in a position to make sense of the information and go off in different directions.”

And while many professors tend to lose track of their graduating students, Tee tries to maintain meticulous records of their whereabouts – even devoting a large portion of his web site to his former students' exploits.

“It’s been a pleasure to work with them over the years,” he says. “It’s a nice feeling when they do well.” **P**

## Learning to thrive

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The idea behind Concordia’s Community Economic Development program was first broached in the early 1990s. It received a huge boost during Concordia’s capital campaign, the Campaign for a New Millennium, when donors pledged nearly \$1 million to the Institute and the proposed program. Most of the funding came from Scotiabank, ScotiaMcLeod, Canadian Pacific, the Laurentian Bank of Canada and Investor’s Group.

“At the time, no one in Canada was offering high-quality training to help community practitioners address the endemic problems and barriers facing low-income communities,” says Lance Evoy, Coordinator of Concordia’s Institute in Management and Community Development, who helped spearhead the program’s original proposal.

For more information on the CED program, call Michael Chervin at (514) 848-3965, or visit the program on the Web at <http://scpa-eapc.concordia.ca> **P**

## Contributors

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