

The Blue Ridge Chemist

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Washington and Lee Hosts October Meeting

<http://membership.acs.org/v/vbr>

VIRGINIA BLUE RIDGE SECTION AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY

587th SECTION MEETING

Hosted by Washington and Lee University

Wednesday, October 13, 2004

PROGRAM:

- 5:30-6:30 Social Time, Great Hall, Science Center
- 6:30-7:30 Dinner, Great Hall of the Science Center
- 7:30-8:30 Talk, Room A-214 of the Science Center

The social time, dinner, and talk will take place in the Science Center at Washington and Lee University. The speaker will be George Bodner, speaking on "The Mismeasurers of Man: How Scientists Fall into Traps of Nonobjectivity".

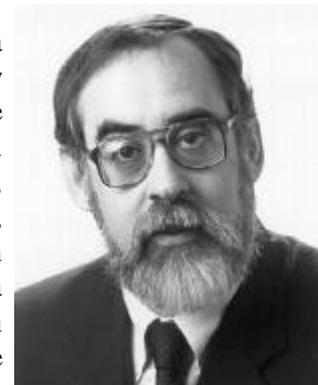
Dinner will be an Italian buffet, with veggie & meat lasagna, Caesar salad, antipasto salad, garlic bread, apple crisp, coffee, iced tea, and water. Cost for the dinner is \$12.00, with students and retired ACS members half price.

Reservations for the dinner must be made by WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, one week before the meeting, by calling Elizabeth Cox at 540-458-8163, or by e-mail to coxe@wlu.edu, or regular mail to Department of Chemistry, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA 24450.

**The Mismeasure of Man: How Scientists
Fall into Traps of Nonobjectivity**

The history of science provides abundant tests of ideas from the philosophy of science. This lecture will examine a period during which scientists searched for quantitative measures that could be applied to individual members of a group to characterize the relative ability of the group, in order to provide a basis for breeding a better race. It will focus on the work of: 1) Samuel Morton and Paul Broca, who tried to find empirical data to show that certain races were in fact superior to others, 2) Karl Pearson, the father of the correlation coefficient, who tried to show why Jewish immigration into the United Kingdom should be limited, and 3) H.H. Goddard, who accomplished in the United States what Pearson could not in Britain, a change in the laws which restricted immigration from "intellectually and morally inferior" groups, and 4) Louis Agassiz, who was the leading American proponent of the theory of polygeny: the notion that the different human races must represent different species. In the course of this lecture, we will probe the notion of the objective scientist, who was described by Pearson as follows. There is only one solution to a problem of this kind, and it lies in the cold light of statistical inquiry? We have no axes to grind. We have no governing body to propitiate by well advertised discoveries; we are paid by nobody to reach results of a given bias. We have no electors, no subscribers to encounter in the market place. We firmly believe that we have no political, no religious, and no social prejudices? We rejoice in numbers and figures for their own sake and, subject to human fallibility, collect our data ? as all scientists must do ? to find out the truth that is in them.

George Bodner was born and raised within a half-mile of Kodak Park in Rochester, New York. In spite of this, he entered the State University of New York at Buffalo as a history/philosophy major. At SUNY he found, much to his amazement, that chemistry was fun, and he changed his major (under the mistaken impression that jobs were easier to find as a chemist). After a mediocre career as an undergraduate (B.S., 1969), he entered graduate school at Indiana University (Ph.D., 1972), undoubtedly on the basis of letters of recommendation. He apparently did well enough in graduate school as a double major in inorganic or organic chemistry to gain an appointment as a visiting assistant professor at the University of Illinois (1972-75). His research interests at the time focused on the application of ^{13}C NMR spectroscopy to studies of the structure of and bonding in organometallic complexes. While at Illinois, he made the mistake of professing total ignorance of biochemistry to one of his colleagues in that area. After a semester of intense study to relieve this obvious deficiency, he was asked to fill an appointment as a visiting professor in biochemistry for the summer of 1974. Having survived that, he was actually invited back for the summers of 1975 and 1976. Two things became self-evident during the tenure at Illinois. He found that teaching was fun and realized that his research could best be described as searching for definitive answers to questions that no one ever asked. When the time came to leave Illinois, he therefore took a job as two-thirds of the chemistry faculty at Stephens College -- a women's college in Columbia, MO -- where he lasted for two years (1975-77), teaching general, organic, inorganic, and biochemistry. In 1977, an opening in chemical education was advertised at Purdue University. He applied for the position, and the faculty at the institution offered him the job. They have since compounded their error by promoting him to first associate professor and then professor of chemistry and education. He is the author of more than 80 papers and 28 books or laboratory manuals. He has been known to claim in public that his primary interest is epistemology. His interests also include the development of materials to assist undergraduate instruction, research on how students learn, and the history and philosophy of science.



New Program Aims to Help Mature Chemists

ACS industrial members age 45 and over who have lost their jobs, or have been given notice that they will become unemployed by December 31, are eligible for a pilot program that aims to assist them to return to work.

Five mid- and late-career members will receive financial subsidies to receive professional career coaching and to participate in the Chemjobs Career Center at the Spring 2005 National Meeting in San Diego. The new program, "Member Career Outreach," was launched this fall by the ACS Department of Career Services with the support of Corporation Associates.

Data show that mature chemists (age 45+) face very different challenges in securing employment than younger chemists. Not only are older workers more likely to be unemployed and to experience lengthy periods of unemployment, but they also may lack recent experience in looking for a job, face greater family and financial responsibilities than younger candidates, have outdated skills, bring unrealistic expectations to the job search, and suffer age discrimination.

According to data from the 2004 ACS Comprehensive Salary and Employment Status Survey, the unemployment rate is positively correlated with age. Not only is the unemployment rate higher for older chemists, but chemists over the age of 45 are likely to experience a lengthier period of unemployment than younger chemists. According to the latest survey, as of March 1, 2004, 38.5 percent of the unemployed age 45+ had been unemployed for a year or more, while only 17 percent of those under age 45 were unemployed for a long period.

The "Member Career Outreach" program will help grantees in four essential ways:

- * It will provide financial support to receive professional career coaching, purchased online and delivered via telephone and e-mail. This personal, one-on-one assistance can help members refine their job-search strategy.

- * It covers travel expenses to attend the Spring 2005 National Meeting in San Diego. This will enable grantees to participate in Chemjobs Career Center, including taking interviews with prospective employers and attending workshops and technical sessions.

- * A reception for mid- and late-career job seekers and selected employers will be held at the San Diego National Meeting. This will afford grantees an opportunity to interact informally with other chemists, including prospective employers. Networking is known to be one of the main mechanisms by which job seekers learn of job opportunities and eventually secure positions.

- * Each participant will receive a career transition workbook developed by the Department of Career Services. The workbook will guide ACS members through the stages of the career transition process as well as provide a record-keeping system for tracking the progress of their job search.

After advertising "Member Career Outreach" in Chemical & Engineering News, DCS will select awardees by a combination of lottery and evaluation of their application materials with the assistance of the Subcommittee on Professional Services of the Committee on Economic and Professional Affairs (CEPA). (CEPA reviews ACS career programs and services.) Those selected for the program will be notified in early January.

To apply for the program or for further information, contact Elaine Diggs at e_diggs@acs.org.

FROM THE EDITOR

At Monday's meeting at the Governor's School I heard that the map to the Governor's school had the wrong exit. For this I would like to apologize. I would also like to invite your comments on the contents and format of the newsletter, both positive and negative.

Vern

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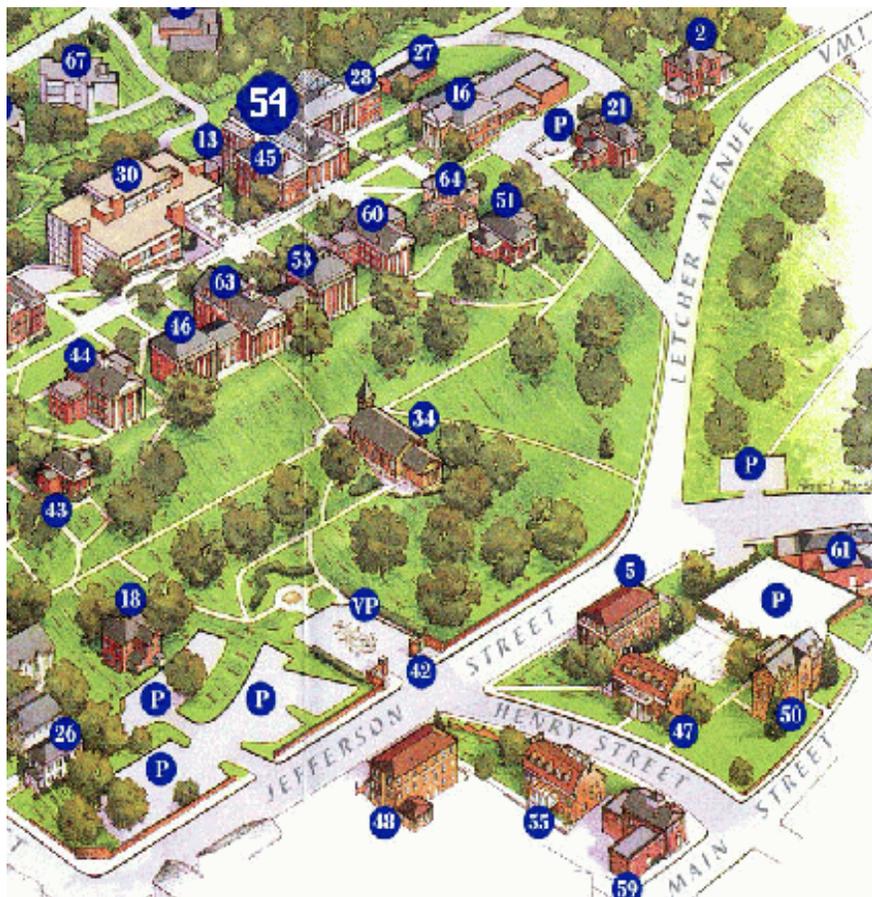
phone (w) 540-378-5158
phone (h) 540-387-1681
e-mail miller@roanoke.edu

Directions to the Washington And Lee University

(Adapted from W&L Web site, <http://www2.wlu.edu/web/page/normal/272.html>.)

Follow I-81 to exit 191 (which puts you onto I-64). Next, take exit 55 off I-64. Turn left onto Route 11 south at the stop sign. After three stoplights you will cross the Maury River and bear right onto Route 11 Business, which becomes Main Street and then Jefferson Street. After you pass Virginia Military Institute, W&L will be on your right. Parking is available in the lots to your right. The Science Center is designated building 54 on the map below.

Map of Washington and Lee University



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THE BLUE RIDGE CHEMIST
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The November Virginia Blue Ridge Section meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 8 at Ferrum College. The speaker will be Joe Vinson speaking on "The Chemistry of Marijuana in Humans". The contact person is Jason Powell.