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IN MEMORIAM



Don D. Irish
(1905-1987)

Don DeLance Irish, Ph.D., an internationally recognized authority on industrial hygiene and toxicology, died in Midland, Michigan, November 23, 1987, at the age of 82. Dr. Irish had been research and development director of the Biochemical Research Laboratory of The Dow Chemical Company from 1933 to 1965. Don was a charter (26-year) member of the Society of Toxicology, a Distinguished Fellow of the Society, and the 1970 recipient of the Merit Award.

Dr. Irish was born January 17, 1905, in Turner, Maine. He attended Leavitt Institute in Turner and received a bachelor of science degree from Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, in 1929. In 1931 he married the former Louise Clark, who survives him, and together they raised two children. He received a doctorate in biochemistry from the University of Cincinnati in 1932, and after graduation worked for a brief

period for the William S. Merrill Company, a manufacturer of pharmaceuticals. He joined Dow in 1933 and grew with the company for 37 years, retiring in 1970.

Don was a pioneer in environmental health. When he came to Dow in 1933, he was the only biochemist in the company. He liked to tell the story that the president of Dow thought he needed a biochemist, so he hired Don; then when he came to work, the president told him to "find something to do." Don quickly found the need for toxicological information and "became" a toxicologist. He subsequently surrounded himself with dedicated people and created the foundation of an internationally recognized laboratory with leaders in industrial hygiene (Edgar Adams and Harold Hoyle), industrial toxicology (V. K. Rowe), and microbiology (Edwin Dunn). Don was "in charge" from 1933 to 1965.

A Renaissance Man, Don provided a broad vision when vision was needed. Under his tutelage industrial toxicology and industrial hygiene at Dow were nurtured in their early years. His outlook was ideally suited to a science that had little history or experience, and was serving a technology growing at an unheard of rate. Others might have chosen to specialize, but Don realized the need for the interdisciplinary approach to environmental health long before it became popular and helped establish a long standing cooperative effort at Dow between the safety, industrial hygiene, toxicology, and medical departments. Monthly luncheon meetings set a tone for informal but effective communication and mutual cooperation that remains a most effective way to protect employee health and the environment. This cooperative approach of exchanging data, methods, and experience in an open manner to improve the knowledge and practice of these independent sciences extended to universities, trade associations, and to local, state, and national governments. He was a frequent author of scientific papers and books, and encouraged his peers to publish and share information. Don preferred informal communication and abhorred the legalistic approach to science which has become a dominant part of environmental health.

Don was a 50-year member of the American Industrial Hygiene Association and was the 1966 recipient of the Donald E. Cummings Award for outstanding contributions to the knowledge and practice of industrial hygiene. He was a 54-year member of the American Chemical Society. Don was a charter member of the SOT education committee and a strong proponent of cooperation between academia and industry. He was also a member of the American Society of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics and the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology. Don's broad interests also kept him active in a number of local organizations, including the Memorial Presbyterian Church, the Midland Nature Club, the Chippewa Nature Center, and the Wildlife Recovery Association.

Those of us who were lucky enough to have worked closely with Don recognize him as an outstanding friend and leader. He will be missed by his many friends and colleagues.

THEODORE R. TORKELSON
315 Birch Street
Roscommon, Michigan 48653

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