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Obituary

S.A. Roach: An Appreciation

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Stan Roach died in October 1996. He was president of BOHS in 1969-1970, and founder president of the Institute of Occupational Hygienists in 1975. His mathematical ability, his readiness to apply practical skills in a range of industrial environments, and his concern for the proper recognition of occupational hygienists, earned him a leading place in his generation of professional colleagues.

An early employer recognised Stan's abilities, and enabled him to get a higher education. He then joined the MRC's Pneumoconiosis Research Unit (PRU), in about 1948. He became one of the small group of us attempting to evaluate exposure to fibrogenic dusts, in his case in coal mining. Stan worked at PRU with H. H. Watson, the pioneer of the thermal precipitator, but he recognised the problems of using a short-period instrument in a fluctuating environment. In a series of papers, Stan helped establish a strategy by which the thermal precipitator could be used as the Coal Board's standard instrument. However, his work on the counting errors that could arise from particle overlap also showed the instrument's shortcomings.

Stan also worked at PRU in the development of practical instruments for measuring the respirable mass fraction, contributing to B. M. Wright's work on the Hexhlet. Stan shared a flat until he married with Heinz Wolff, who has since become widely known for his television work, and with Heinz Stan developed the conicycle, a long-term mass sampler for the mining industry. I recall borrowing one from Heinz in the early 1950s for (unsuccessful) factory trials.

Towards the end of his PRU time, Stan co-operated with Richard Schilling in providing the air sampling expertise for the cotton dust surveys in Lancashire, and in the late 1950s he left PRU to join Richard at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. This involved teaching—he published proposals for the first full-time occupational hygiene course in 1962—but I understand that he had no real enthusiasm for this aspect of University life. He was more interested in his scientific work, including errors produced by the overlap of particles, which was the subject of his Ph.D. thesis.

Stan was an early member of GPOH—the unstructured group of practising occupational hygienists who met informally to discuss matters of mutual interest. As host, Stan chaired the meeting at the London School which agreed the 1 mg/m^3 standard for respirable quartz, which led to the formation of the BOHS Standards Committee, with Stan as one of its members. He played a major role in drafting the Chrysotile Asbestos Standard of 1968—very important in its own right and as a pattern for all later standards. He remained a part of the Committee and several of its sub-committees up to 1983, providing an invaluable logical (mathematical?) background to proceedings. Over that period, and later, I had many friendly but firm disagreements with him on air sampling strategy—he could not understand my opposition to 'static' air sampling, with its constancy allowing statistical interpretation, and I did not see why he did not wholeheartedly embrace 'personal' sampling despite its statistical problems.

Towards the end of his time at the School he became restless, and in the early 1970s he had a brief affair with an American commercial service, which he left to take up the post at the RTZ Avonmouth smelter, on an interim basis while John Belbin was being trained at the School. In 1975, he joined ICI as the Company's first corporate occupational hygienist, in the erstwhile central medical group. The nature and scale of the task of establishing, and leading professionally, the occupational hygiene discipline in so diverse a company was a new challenge to Stan. Initially, feathers were ruffled, but gradually a company-wide occupational hygiene presence evolved, leaving Stan time to develop the substance of his future book, and also (in deference to Einstein) his general theory of threshold limit values, later to appear in the book. During this period, Stan was awarded the degree of D.Sc. by the University of London for his work in occupational hygiene—the first to be awarded in the subject.

Stan left ICI in 1988, but was soon awarded a Regent's Professorship at the University of California, Berkeley, for the 1988/89 academic year, as a dis-

tinguished individual from a 'non academic' setting. Over that year, he worked closely with Professor S. M. Rappaport, continuing his work on the setting and documentation of TLVs, publishing a joint paper in 1989 which provoked considerable debate over ACGIH's procedures. On his return to the U.K. for 'retirement' just outside Cambridge, he found a part time lecturing job at one of the colleges, while completing the publication of his book *Health Risks from Hazardous Substances at Work* (1992)—the first major work from his generation—and I understand that even when his health was failing, he was compiling another. In 1994, he received the William P. Yant award of the AIHA as an individual residing outside the U.S.A. for his 'outstanding contributions' to industrial hygiene.

Despite all of the above Stan will be remembered for just one brief action, at about 11.00 a.m. on 16th July 1975. Although BOHS had recognised the 'discipline' of occupational hygiene by the formation of the Examining Board in the 1960s, it was much less clear as to the 'profession'. By 1974, those of us (particularly GPOH members) who thought of ourselves as professionals were concerned that many members of BOHS were calling themselves 'occupational hygienists' without having bothered the Examining Board; that the professional bodies of both Safety and Chemistry were claiming that occupational hygiene was merely a sub-discipline of their own; that many of our medical colleagues thought that occupational hygiene was merely a technical role, parallel with nursing; that HSE was claiming that all its inspectors were occupational hygienists; and so on.

In 1974 BOHS responded with a committee, with Stan in the Chair, which recommended an institute, separated from BOHS. This was turned down by BOHS's Management Board, and two alternatives (a professional committee subject to the Management Board, or a change in BOHS structure to make it a professional body) were to be debated and voted upon at a General Meeting. Before this took place both Stan and I, and I suspect several others, were 'heavily lobbied' (threatened), and we knew that neither proposal would satisfy all parties. At the meeting, there was a very visible 'block' voting faction to oppose the second motion. After the meeting had heard the proposals, there was a break, during which Stan gathered a group (about nine) of us, and we discussed the matter for about five minutes in a laboratory. We emerged with the nucleus of the Institute of Occupational Hygienists, the formation of which Stan then announced to the meeting. Afterwards, we were accused of attempting to destroy the Society—quite ridiculous, with Stan as a Past President (1969/70) and the rest of us owing our careers to our membership of the Society, with its interdisciplinary exchanges of ideas, and the development of our discipline.

As regards the final outcome, the Society has reverted to the role at which it was most successful—a learned society covering all aspects of non-clinical occupational health without any professional complications. The Institute is flourishing, and it is a respected member of the international grouping of the profession. We have the best of both worlds, and a very great deal of the credit must go to the founding father of the Institute—Stan Roach.

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