

Tribute to Harold M. McNair on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday

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My earliest memorable experience with Professor Harold M. McNair was in October, 1983, at the International Symposium on Advances in Chromatography, which was held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. I was a young faculty member then at Brigham Young University, and just beginning to meet the “icons” of chromatography. When I started as a graduate student at Indiana University working in capillary column gas chromatography, the first book I read was “Basic Gas Chromatography,” which was authored by Harold in the 1960s. So, as you can imagine, I was excited to see him in Amsterdam. The social activity at the Symposium, as I remember, was a dinner in a rustic structure that catered toward tourists by having artisans under the same roof working on their specialty crafts. Harold went out of his way to spend some time with me explaining the Dutch customs and even purchased and presented to me a Dutch Delft blue and white vase as a gift, which I still display in a prominent place at home. Early on, I gained a great appreciation for Harold’s passion for welcoming and mentoring newcomers to the field of chromatography.

Harold has always first been an educator throughout his career, whether in industry or academics. He is driven to teach the principles behind the techniques much more than just how they work. His talks at scientific meetings are always presented like a teacher in a classroom; his explanations are carefully planned and well-articulated, and he always looks for feedback, understanding and learning. This undoubtedly is the basis of his overwhelming success as a short course instructor as well as a university professor. He never seems too busy to answer questions or give advice, whatever the situation is, and to whoever is looking for help. Whenever you are in the presence of Harold, you always feel welcome and appreciated – this is a great personal gift that he gives to the chromatography community in addition to his scientific expertise and insights. I thank him for his influence on me personally, and grateful that he ranks high as friend and associate in my chromatography world.

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