A MEMORIAL
to
CHARLES C. GRIFFIN

Charles C. (Charley) Griffin, Professor Emeritus of Chemistry and Biochemistry, passed away Sunday, February 26, 2006, at Vitas Hospice at Fort Hamilton Hospital, Hamilton, Ohio. He was born on July 23, 1938, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Edward and Elizabeth (Campbell) Griffin. He grew up in Cape May, New Jersey. Although Charley did not often talk about his youth; he was proud of his Irish heritage, joking during his long final illness that, "You can kill an Irishman; it just takes a long time."

Charley's education provided him with a strong background in chemistry which he complemented with his passion for biochemistry. He received his A.B. in chemistry from the Catholic University of America in 1960 where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and was a member of Alpha Delta Gamma fraternity. He was then employed in the Biochemistry Branch at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center for several years. His masters studies were at Georgetown University. He was awarded an NIH Pre-doctoral Fellowship to pursue graduate studies in biochemistry at The Johns Hopkins University where he received his Ph.D. in 1968. He joined the chemistry department at Miami University immediately after receiving his Ph.D., entering a department poised for growth and change.

Charley was the first biochemist hired by the department of chemistry, and he was responsible for building biochemistry from a minor area within the department into a program that now offers two degrees. He helped design the basic two-semester curriculum in biochemistry that we still follow, and he planned and taught the advanced biochemistry lab that is an essential component of our current degree. He built biochemistry research activities with his efforts in obtaining external support to acquire essential instrumentation and resources. Charley was always an early adopter of new technology, owning one of the first personal computers on campus and using PowerPoint slides in his classes as soon as it was feasible.

For many years, Charley's research focused on membrane transport of carbohydrates. Complex kinetics were required to address these problems; and in addition to the experimental work, Charley developed computer code to help with the kinetic analysis of his data. An interest in new problems was a constant theme of his career. He was especially proud of his last research efforts to develop a form of the anticoagulant drug heparin that could be administered as a pill rather than by injection. He received five patents for that work. He recognized how essential collaborations with the life sciences were to the success of a biochemistry program, and he fostered strong relationships with the departments of zoology, microbiology and botany throughout his time at Miami. His collegial efforts paid off in the form of co-authored publications and long friendships with colleagues like Ron Treick from microbiology.

Charley educated thousands of students in biochemistry in courses ranging from survey courses to advanced courses in kinetics and membrane transport. He was a skilled lecturer, often giving a detailed fifty-minute lecture based on a few phrases noted on an index card. His course notebooks were filled with original research articles relevant to the topics he was teaching. In first-year chemistry, Charley provided

students with the balance of intellectual rigor and personal compassion that helps first-year undergraduates adapt to college life.

As a mentor to graduate research students, Charley balanced high expectations with personal concern. He demanded a lot from his students, and in return he provided them with excellent research tools and taught them to think critically about scientific problems. His graduate students recall that his cheerful attitude and constant support made graduate school a pleasurable experience. Charley led the way as the Ph.D. program in the department grew, cultivating biochemistry as an area of strength and building the program with a well-conceived system of courses, exams, seminars and thesis problems to develop excellence in students.

Charley's great sense of humor was manifested in the occasional prank directed toward his friends and colleagues. When Gil Gordon was department chair, and money was a bit tight, Charley used the copy machine to turn a photo of Gil and a newspaper ad for 'Gil's Loans' into an announcement for the office bulletin board—Charley still relished that joke in the re-telling almost thirty years later. On another occasion, he brought Ann Hagerman a can of artificial saliva not long after his first surgery for throat cancer. At the time, Ann was analyzing animal saliva samples, and Charley commented that his artificial saliva might give cleaner results!

Charley served the department in many ways outside of teaching and research. He was Acting Chair between 1984-1986 and Director of Graduate Studies for a number of years. He was active on many other departmental committees and was always willing to help out when needed. His advice and mentoring are still appreciated by faculty who joined the department after him. Charley retired as Professor Emeritus in 2002.

Charley relished his home life. He was immensely proud of his children, Ed and Lisa (Huddleston). His dog, a West Highland White Terrier, was always in attendance at home and was the focus of an endless supply of amusing anecdotes. Helen, his wife of forty-five years, was a special source of joy and companionship throughout his life.

Memorial Committee:

Ann Hagerman
Jan Jaworski
John Sebastian