

Tribute to John D. Sherman

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High bandwidth is a phrase used today to describe those people who demonstrate intense curiosity, intellectual drive, and capability of working or conversing across a broad range of arts, sciences, and technologies. The term might as well have been coined to describe John D. Sherman.

Many scientists and engineers, at Union Carbide, UOP and from many other industrial, academic, and government institutions spent rewarding hours engaged with John in conversations on ion exchange, adsorption, molecular modeling, process modeling, air separation, and the structure, chemistry and properties of zeolites. One colleague describes him this way, “John was one of a rare breed who combined deep scientific insight and acumen with an entrepreneurial intuition in serving unmet market needs. His passion and commitment to his craft was complemented by his genuine desire to share his gifts with the next generation of young scientists as a generous teacher and mentor. It was a great privilege to call John a colleague and a friend.”

Another co-worker recounts his experiences with John; “I first met John almost 30 years ago. At that time, UOP was working on improved adsorbents for SORBEX processes, and Union Carbide manufactured these adsorbents for UOP. John was the key technical contact for UCC with UOP. It was clear from the first

meeting that John had not only a deep knowledge of the science and technology of adsorption but an interest in almost everything. His spirit of scientific curiosity made an immediate and lasting impression. Later, when John joined UOP as part of the UOP/UCC joint venture, it was a pure pleasure to interact with John. He will be remembered for his knowledge, his openness to new ideas, and his unlimited curiosity.”

Although John Sherman was not actively engaged in mathematical modeling of adsorption for any significant period in the last twenty years, he was the driving intellect behind several of the most stimulating conceptual models for adsorption, ion exchange and transport phenomena in adsorbent materials that have ever been shared within Union Carbide or UOP. Neither was John active in the practice of molecular modeling, yet he had insights into how things worked at the atomic scale and was capable of critiquing and better yet stimulating experts in the field toward truly insightful work. His thinking on these matters contributed mightily to the UOP bottom line through new products, improved products and better insights into what made our products work.

John was able to make connections between the work of experts in other fields and technological challenges. Not only was he making the technical connections, more often than not he was able to make the interpersonal connections with those experts from around the world. UOP's reputation as a technology company is richer for his efforts to make friends among the adsorption, ion exchange and separations communities.

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Making people happy, helping others, and mentoring younger scientists were among John's most endearing characteristics. John was a happy man with a smiling face and someone who was always pleasant to talk to. His sense of humor and memory for trivia is shown in the following anecdote: "Along with the technological stimulation we also received intellectual tidbits such as the etymology of common phrases. Thanks to John I shall never forget the meaning of the term "a tinker's dam."

He was no stranger to anyone around him. John's concern for others is underscored by the following recollection: "In October of 1997, John and I attended a Separation Technology conference in Davos, Switzerland. My wife and Carol, John's wife, also went with us on the trip. John knew that my wife's birthday was on that day and quietly arranged a birth-

day celebration during a dinner with the 70+ conference attendees. It was a big surprise to all of us and certainly made my wife very happy. At the same time, he entertained everyone during the dinner. This is only one of the thousands of cases that demonstrate John's nature. John was a friend, a willing mentor, and a generous contributor to many individuals' careers."

Finally, John will be remembered by his friends for his love and concern for his family. His favorite place to be was sailing in the waters off Cape Cod, Massachusetts, where he spent his summers with his wife, Carol and their sons at their cottage. We know that many readers will have lasting memories of John Sherman, and we hope that this tribute will help you relive some of your own recollections of how he touched our lives.