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Professor George Butler

This year George Butler, a long-time ambassador around the world for polymer chemistry, is celebrating 50 years of continuous service in the Chemistry Department at the University of Florida. Further, Professor Butler turns 80 this month, and the University of Florida has chosen to name the new polymer laboratories within the University's largest chemistry building in his and Josephine Butler's honor. We think it is fitting to describe the work he has done for students in Gainesville and for the entire polymer community.

Professor Butler, born on April 15th, 1916, in Liberty, Mississippi, finished his first college training at Southwest Mississippi Junior College in 1936, followed by completion of his B.A. and M.S. degrees in chemistry with special distinction at Mississippi College in 1938. He then went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, receiving his Ph.D. in organic chemistry in 1942.

Professor Butler's introduction to polymer chemistry came as a researcher at the Rohm & Haas Co. in Philadelphia during World War II, where he pioneered the synthesis of explosive polymeric binders for propellants. In 1946 he moved to Gainesville and began teaching as an instructor in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Florida. In doing so, he established what has become one of the oldest continuous polymer teaching and research efforts in a chemistry department in the United States. George has been one of a small number of academic polymer chemists who brought the field of polymers to the forefront status it enjoys today.

The Butler research program is perhaps best known for its discovery and elucidation of cyclopolymerization, chemistry in which high polymers are formed by ring-forming propagation steps of nonconjugated diene monomers—a process that two Nobel laureates predicted was not possible. Cyclopolymerization has proven to be of enormous academic interest and significant practical importance. Well over 3000 publications have dealt with various aspects derived from the original discovery and publications. Commercial polymers ranging from applications for water purification to antitumor agents have been based on cyclopolymers. The creative contributions of Professor Butler and his students span many other areas in polymer chemistry including, inter alia, mechanisms of donor−acceptor polymerization, triazolinedione-based polymer chemistry, and specialty water-soluble polymers for viscosity control. For these contributions, he received the ACS Award in Polymer Chemistry in 1980.

Other awards for his research contributions include the Florida Blue Key Distinguished Professor Award (1965), the Herty Award (1978), The Florida Academy of Sciences Medalist Award (1982), the Charles H. Stone Award (1983), and the Southern Chemist Award (1985). Particularly meaningful to him has been his receiving both an Honorary Doctor of Science degree (1986) and a Distinguished Alumnus Award (1993) from Mississippi College.

Professor Butler has been involved in many other activities that have promoted and advanced polymer chemistry. He organized and continues to edit the *Journal of Macromolecular Science—Reviews* and has

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served on the Editorial or Advisory Boards of many prestigious polymer journals, including having been one of the original Advisory Board Members of this journal, *Macromolecules*. His entrepreneurial spirit, along with that of Professor Paul Tarrant, led to the establishment of Peninsular Chem Research (PCR) in Gainesville, a company that originally provided specialty monomers for the polymer community. Thus his involvement in industry as well as academics is well known, and his consulting for numerous companies over the years has kept his focus on meaningful basic research very much alive.

George Butler has long been recognized as an outstanding educator of polymer chemists. He has used the research environment to train 94 M.S. & Ph.D. chemists, along with an equivalent number of postdoctoral associates. He and his wife, Josephine, "raised" these people to become fine scientists, and their dedication to these students is manifested in the family atmosphere that continues today. Butler students fondly remember their time in Gainesville, their being challenged scientifically, and their being entertained by the Butlers at Christmas and lake parties. Being a member of the Butler environment for graduate study was indeed a privilege.

His vision and energy toward graduate education led to the creation of the Center for Macromolecular Science & Engineering in 1970 at the University of Florida, an organization which fosters collaboration between the various departments on campus involved in polymer science. For his pioneering and sustained successes in polymer education, Professor Butler was awarded the Paul Flory Award in Polymer Education by the Division of Polymer Chemistry of the American Chemical Society in 1988.

As was true for the small handful of academic polymer chemists of his era, Professor Butler literally had to boot-strap his academic career at what in the 1940s was considered an out-of-the-way college in Gainesville. He never hesitated in coming to this charming old southern town, and he has witnessed change and growth during literally one-third of the University of Florida's existence. Through his hard work, chemical insight, an unwavering integrity, his friendly good-naturedness, and a responsiveness to those people who depended on him, Professor Butler successfully built an internationally recognized polymer program. His efforts have helped propel the University of Florida to become an outstanding teaching and research institution.

The polymer community worldwide salutes George Butler for his many achievements in research and education. Congratulations are due to Professor Butler on the occasion of his 80th birthday and to both George and Josephine for their 50 years of continuous service to our profession.

K. B. Wagener

Department of Chemistry
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida 32611-7200

S. Richard Turner

Research Laboratories
Eastman Chemical Company
Kingsport, Tennessee 37662

MA9601575