



IN MEMORIAM

Eugene Zavarin
Professor Emeritus of Forest Products
UC Berkeley
1924 – 2012

Eugene Zavarin, whose career spanned nearly 40 years at the University of California, Berkeley, passed away on July 23, 2012, at the age of 88. He was born on February 21, 1924, in Sombor, Yugoslavia (the northwestern part of present-day Serbia), of Russian parents that had fled Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution. He received a *Diplom Vorprüfung* (chemistry) from the Universität Göttingen, Germany, in 1949 and immigrated to the United States the same year. Dr. Zavarin received a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from UC Berkeley in 1954 and became a U.S. citizen in 1955. In 1956, he married Valentina Kusubov, who immigrated to the U.S. from Latvia in 1949. They had five children (Ksenya, Sergei, Michael, Nina, and Mavrik) and were blessed with four grandchildren (Timothy, Gabriel, Dimitri, and Emilia).

Dr. Zavarin was a classic scholar and gentleman. His early experiences in the turbulent periods of early twentieth century Europe, including his work as an interpreter for a displaced persons' camp in Hanover, Germany in 1946, undoubtedly led to a lifelong journey of knowledge, fellowship, travel, and language – being fluent in five languages and having the ability to read many more. In addition to his active career in chemistry, he was a prolific writer of fiction, completing three novels and a dozen long and short stories during his retirement (all unpublished). Dr. Zavarin was also an expert storyteller and entertained his children with many original tales that haunt his children and grandchildren to this day. He was also very proud of his first job in the U.S. – selling ice cream. He liked to tell the story that people would come from all around to the ice cream parlor where he worked, since he learned to "synthesize" the best tasting ice cream and would create the best new flavors. He did not make much money (which was not that important to him), but he did acknowledge gaining quite a bit of weight by testing his results...!

Dr. Zavarin's entire professional career was spent at UC Berkeley, starting as a teaching assistant in 1952. He was one of the original academic staff members at the University of California Forest Products Laboratory (UCFPL) built in 1955 at UC Berkeley's Richmond Field Station. He started his professional career at UC Berkeley as an

Agriculture Experiment Station specialist in wood chemistry in 1954, was appointed professor of wood chemistry in 1975, and retired in 1991. As a former student and colleague at the UCFPL stated, “I considered Eugene one of the most respected classic wood chemists of the 20th century.” He was a leader in developing the field of chemosystematics of wood – identifying wood species by their chemical profile – with an expertise in the extractive component of coniferous wood species. In the later years of his career, he was a leader in research to develop chemical wood bonding methods without the use of adhesives, and in the oxygen plasma treatment of wood and the effect of plasma on wood properties. Over his long professional career, he published well over 100 papers in numerous international journals and was a member of the American Chemical Society, Sigma Xi, Forest Products Society, Phytochemical Society of North America, American Association for Advancement of Science, and the International Academy of Wood Science. During his long career at UCFPL, he took two sabbatical leaves, one at Institut de Chimie des Substances Naturelles, Gif-sur-Yvette, France (1963), and a second in 1985 when he visited research institutions in France, Germany, Israel, and Greece. At Berkeley, he also served on the Academic Senate’s divisional Committee on Library from 1981 to 1984.

As told by his son Mavrik, “he was most proud of his publication and research record, the students that participated in his research program, and the opportunity to teach undergraduate and graduate students at the UC Berkeley campus. He loved hiking and field work, which included dragging his whole family to the wilderness of California (and Mexico) to collect tree samples (we loved it too!). He was also proud of his longstanding tenure as Santa Claus during the Forest Products Laboratory Annual Christmas/Holiday party, where he would ride in on a big red sleigh to hand out gifts to children.”

Dr. Zavarin was deeply devoted to the Russian Orthodox faith and was one of the original members of the Board of Advisors of the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies at the Archdiocese of Etna, California. He held a strong, and often argued, conviction that science and religion were complementary rather than in conflict with each other. His devotion to science and the scientific method was a common thread throughout his life. Passing this love of science on to his children and students was particularly gratifying. Of his retirement activities, he once wrote in the *California Forester* “Pleasant memories: my son telling me – ‘Thank you, father, for teaching me to love science for the sake of science’.”

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