



IN MEMORIAM

Kenneth Nyitray Trueblood
Professor of Chemistry
UC Los Angeles
1920-1998

Kenneth N. Trueblood, professor emeritus of chemistry and biochemistry, died of melanoma at home in Los Angeles on 7 May 1998. Trueblood was unusual in excelling in all three areas of academic life: teaching, research, and administration.

Born in Dobbs Ferry, New York, on 24 April 1920, Ken earned an AB from Harvard in 1941 and a PhD from Cal Tech in 1947, both in chemistry. His PhD research, under Howard Lucas, emphasized chromatography and spectrophotometry. However, influenced by Linus Pauling, Ken became a crystallographer and spent his research life determining the structures of molecules.

In 1949, after a two- year research fellowship at Cal Tech, Trueblood joined the UCLA faculty as a temporary instructor, replacing James McCullough who was on leave. Within a year he had made his mark teaching freshman chemistry – an assignment he kept throughout his academic life – and was made an assistant professor, rising to full professor in 1960.

Trueblood was a pioneer in the development and use of computer programs to determine three- dimensional electron- density maps from crystallographic data. At that time the USNBS Western Automatic Computer was better suited to this kind of computation than almost any other. This led to collaboration with Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin of Oxford University on the crystal structure of vitamin B12. In those days before e- mail, information about each cycle of refinement was exchanged by ordinary mail and telegraph between Los Angeles and Oxford. Ken's electron- density maps determined larger and larger parts of the molecule and led to the chemical formula reported in 1955, the largest unknown structure reported by that time. He then received a Fulbright Award for study at Oxford University for 1956-57 and continued working there with Hodgkin.

Ken continued to develop better computer programs for determining structures and contributed to fundamental interpretations of molecular motions in crystals. His computational expertise contributed to the Nobel Prize awarded to Dorothy Hodgkin in 1964 and later to the Nobel Prize received by his UCLA colleague Donald Cram in 1987. He was President of the American Crystallographic Association in 1961, and in 2001 the ACA established the Kenneth N. Trueblood Award to be given every three years for exceptional achievement in computational or chemical crystallography. Over the years Ken had many coworkers, graduate students, postdocs, and colleagues at UCLA and other institutions.

Throughout his UCLA career Trueblood continued to teach large freshman chemistry classes. He received the first UCLA Distinguished Teaching Award in 1961, the 1978 National Award for Excellence in Teaching given by the Manufacturing Chemists Association, and a UCLA Letters and Science Faculty Award in 1982. He was a coauthor of two books, *Crystal Structure Analysis* (1972) with Jenny Glusker, and the freshman chemistry text *Chem One* (1976 and 1980) with Jurg Waser and Charles Knobler. Shortly after his death the large lecture room (CS50) where he had taught thousands of students was named the Kenneth N. Trueblood Lecture Hall in his honor.

Ken also served with distinction in various administrative positions at UCLA, first as the chair of the Department of Chemistry from 1965 to 1970, and then dean of the College of Letters and Science from 1971 to 1974, a position he resigned in order to return to teaching and research. He was chair of the UCLA Academic Senate in 1983-84. Although Ken retired as professor emeritus in 1989, he was recalled to service as chair of the department (now Chemistry and Biochemistry) in 1990-1991.

Ken was committed to teaching and research and he expected his colleagues to have similar high standards. He did not hesitate to speak with them or send them notes when he felt that they needed to improve. Clarity and correctness in writing was also a life-long concern; he regularly read documents with a marking pen in hand, correcting the English and passing his corrections on to the writer. A colleague, seeing a copy of her thesis in Ken's bookcase that had been sent to him by her research mentor 10 years before, leafed through it and was astounded to see the corrections he had made as he read it.

This insistence upon standards suggests that Trueblood could be a difficult colleague. In fact he was anything but. A modest man, he was always friendly and had an infectious sense of humor.

Another passion was baseball; Ken was a long-time Yankee fan and was delighted to receive a Yankee's cap and jacket among the gifts given to him at his retirement dinner.

Ken is survived by his wife, Jean, a graduate of the School of Social Work at Columbia University.

Charles M. Knobler
Robert L. Scott