

obituary

Herbert Alexander Sober, a major innovator and developer of our current technology for the separation and purification of biologically important macromolecules, died of a heart attack in Washington, D.C., on November 26, 1974, following a relatively minor operation.

Sober was an undergraduate at the City College of the City of New York and received his Ph.D. degree in 1942, majoring in biochemistry at the University of Wisconsin. Following his graduate studies, he spent three years as a toxicologist and as Chief of the Analytical Research Group at Edgewood Arsenal near Baltimore. After two years at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York he joined the National Cancer Institute, NIH, as a member of the Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service, serving as Chief of the Laboratory of Biochemistry. In 1968 he transferred to the US Civil Service and took the position of Chief in the Laboratory of

Nutrition and Endocrinology, National Institutes of Arthritis, Metabolism, and Digestive Diseases. Sober is best known as co-developer, with Elbert Peterson, of the modified cellulose ion exchangers. These substances, which could be prepared in a wide variety of forms having either cationic or anionic characteristics, and possessing a wide range of intrinsic pK values, are extremely gentle to sensitive protein and nucleic acid systems and also exhibit excellent discrimination when combined with the principle of gradient elution for the separation of macromolecular mixtures. There are very few papers published in the biochemical or molecular biological literature that do not quote the use of the cellulose derivations as key tools in the experiments described. The value of these chromatographic techniques was recognised, in 1970, by the selection of Sober and Peterson for the Hillebrand Award, presented by the American Chemical Society of Washington.

The association of Sober's name with chromatography and its applications has tended to obscure his contributions to a number of other areas. He published nearly 150 papers during his career, including the ever-useful *Handbook of Biochemistry*. He was, for example, involved in the first isolation of pure crystalline pyridoxamine and pyridoxal phosphates. In the last few years he and his colleagues, particularly Dr Robert Simpson and G. W. Rushizky, made major advances in our understanding of the interaction between basic oligopeptides and polynucleotides, particularly when applied to research on the chemical nature of chromatin.

Herbert Sober was, above all, a man of great balance and human warmth. He was universally respected by his coworkers and students over the years and maintained, throughout his professional life, a blend of vigorous interest in science and a rare ability to share his love, wisdom, and simplicity with family and friends alike.

announcements

Appointment

Alasdair D. Berrie, Officer-in-charge of the River Laboratory of the Freshwater Biological Association at East Stoke, Wareham, Dorset, has been accorded the title of Visiting Professor in the University of Reading.

Miscellaneous

Biogeography Study Group. At the annual conference of the Institute of British Geographers, this Group was formally constituted. It aims to foster the study and development of biogeography by discussion and field meetings, and by providing contact with those people working in related disciplines. A symposium is scheduled for September, 1975, to be held on the North York Moors. Further information may be obtained from: Dr L. F. Curtis, Department of Geography, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK; Mr J. A. Taylor, Department of Geography, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth Dyfed SY23 3DB, Wales; Secretary, Institute of British Geographers, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR, UK.

Fractionation Services. The American Red Cross National Fractionation Center, supported by the National Heart and Lung Institute, is offering facilities to an investigator, for the pilot-plant or large-scale production of blood proteins, enzymes, membrane fractions and so on. Further information from: Dr M. Wickerhauser, Director, American Red Cross National Fractionation Center, 9312 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20014.

METASERV prize. The Institute of Metallurgists has organised a competition in Metallurgy with prize money totalling £200 (including a special student Prize). The closing date for the competition is July 31, 1975. Further details may be obtained from: *The Metallurgist* or The Institution of Metallurgists, Northway House, High Road, Whetstone, London N20 9LW, UK.

International meeting

April 27-May 3, **Stereochemistry**, Lucerne, Switzerland (Professor J. Dale, Department of Chemistry, University of Oslo, Blindern, Oslo, Norway).

Reports and publications

Great Britain

- UMIST 1824-1974. Pp. 104. (Advance No. 15.) (Manchester: University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, 1974.) [512]
 Scholarships Guide for Commonwealth Postgraduate Students, 1975/1977. Pp. 310. (London: The Association of Commonwealth Universities, 36 Gordon Square, WC1, 1974.) £2.50. [612]
 The Zoological Record, 1970, Vol. 107, Section 1: Comprehensive Zoology. Compiled by J. Fitzgibbon. Pp. vi + 68. £3.65. 1970, Volume 107, Section 3: Porifera together with Archeocyatha. Compiled by S. Ware. Pp. v + 16. £3.65. 1970, Volume 107, Section 5: Echinodermata. Compiled by A. M. Clark. Pp. v + 51. £5.15. (London: The Zoological Society of London, 1974.) [612]
 Agricultural Research Council; and Medical Research Council. Food and Nutrition Research: Report of the ARC/MRC Committee. Pp. xv + 211. (London: HMSO; Amsterdam and New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1974.) £3.80 net. [912]
 The Responsibility of the Governors. By Sir Michael Swann, FRS. (BBC Lunch-Time Lectures, Ninth Series, 1.) Pp. 14. (London: BBC, 1974.) [912]
 A Second Appendix to the Second Edition of an Index of Mineral Species and Varieties Arranged Chemically. By Max H. Hey and Peter G. Embrey. Pp. xii + 168. (London: British Museum, (Natural History), 1974.) [912]

Other countries

- Bibliography of Laser Doppler Anemometry Literature. Edited by F. Durst and M. Zare. Pp. 55. (Copenhagen: DISA Elektronik; Bristol, DISA UK, Techno House, Redcliffe Way, 1974.) gratis. [1911]
 Australia: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization. Division of Soils Technical Paper No. 23: Laboratory Procedures for Cation Exchange Measurements in Soils. By B. M. Tucker. Pp. 46. (Melbourne: CSIRO, 1974.) [1911]
 National Research Council Canada. NRCC No. 13686: A Method of Monitoring Nationally for Possible Delayed Effects of Various Occupational Environments. By H. B. Newcombe. (Associate Committee on Scientific Criteria for Environmental Quality.) Pp. 42. (Ottawa: National Research Council, 1974.) [1911]