

Silicon Valley Chemist

Santa Clara Valley Section

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Chair's Message



April has been a very busy month for our section. In addition to doing our individual taxes, the section held a dinner meeting on April 15, a Family Science Night on April 16, the Chemistry Olympiad on April 25, and then the culmination of the season's dinner meetings with a presentation on the impact of climate change on our oceans and tour of the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute in Moss Landing on Saturday, May 2. And we are doing all this while

still recovering from the Spring National Meeting in Salt Lake City. However, by the time you read this, most of these events will be discussed in the past tense. I hope you have enjoyed them as much as I know I have and will.

This was our second Family Science Night. Last year, we met at a charter school in East Palo Alto. This year, we offered our experiments at the Ben Franklin Intermediate School in Colma. At these events, chemists from our section and from the California section set up over 15 experiments including an identification of mystery powders, paper chromatography, pH experiments, making Slime, plastic recycling, and sampling liquid nitrogen ice cream. Last year, we had several hundred students and their families and this year was just as much a success. I can't think of a better way to celebrate Earth Day and open some young minds to the excitement of chemistry.

If you didn't attend, here are the instructions for an easy Cartesian Diver you can make to amaze your children, grandchildren or cubicle mates. All you need is an empty large soda bottle, a small fast-food ketchup package, and some water. Fill the bottle with water, insert the ketchup package, and cap the bottle. When you squeeze the bottle gently, the ketchup package will descend propelled by physical-chemical-magical properties, more properly known as Archimedes' principle of buoyancy. Submarines and some fish use the same principle to control their buoyancy.

I hope to meet you at the upcoming dinner meetings or at our July picnic.

Our Summer Annual Family Picnic and Award Ceremony

Save this Date!

July 11, 2009

Save this Date!

Stanford University Chemistry Department
Keck and Mudd Buildings



- Wine Tasting Hosted by Floyd Hobbs
- Catered Food by Armadillo Willy's
- Awards and Honors to Our 50th and 60th Year Members

Admission: \$16.00 for adults
\$5.00 for children (age of 4-12)
Free for those 3 and under

More information coming in the June issue.



Death Comes for the Provost

A Science-in-fiction Novel by Dr. James Walsh

Reviewed by Dr. Howard Peters

If you like recent books and action movies having science and technology twists and focus, then you will be fascinated by *Death Comes for the Provost* (2008) by first-time author Dr. James Walsh of Treasure Island, FL. I consider this book to be a great example of the science-in-fiction genre of novels written and promoted by my former Stanford Chemistry Professor, Dr. Carl Djerassi (<http://www.djerassi.com/>). (Indeed, in a recent Royal Society of Chemistry publication, there is a long letter by Dr. Djerassi chiding one English reviewer for not doing his homework – by reporting that modern books do not have the scientist as a hero – omitting his!)

The plot of *Provost* certainly includes an active chemist as the main character and hero. In reading the book, having a science or technical background is not necessary, but, in a few sections, it might be helpful. In Chapter 1, we meet our Provost, Brother Bohuslav, a cunning long-time member of the Order of the Sons of Bedric, the fictional Catholic order that runs Thornton University near a lake

in Middle America. The reader soon realizes that the Provost, faculty, staff and students of Thornton University are not what you expect in this bucolic setting. Rather, Dante's *Inferno*, or worse, the tortured sculpture "The Gates of Hell" by Rodin, soon come to mind. By Chapter 2, we find the protagonist is organic chemist Dr. Montego O'Higgins, who has a lively and productive mind, tenure, teaching responsibilities and a small research group. He specializes in the chemistry of natural products, mostly alkaloids (and some hallucinogens!). Montego is a middle-aged widower, a sometimes seedy professor who cleans up well and could be mistaken at times for an investment banker, or, God forbid, a corporate lawyer. His looks, speech and manner betray a Caribbean heritage and his O'Higgins is a very distant fallen Irish ancestor. He finally arrives at his lab after three bizarre events, more than a little frazzled. Next, a loud closed-door meeting with the Provost does not go well. The following day, the Provost is found dead in his office and the

cause is soon declared: murder by poisoning. The list of usual suspects should include the entire university directory, but Montego is far and away at the very top.

Montego enlists the help of his core support group at "The Philosophers Table" (aka known by outsiders as "The Table from Hell") including his lovely and astute lady-in-waiting, Anthropology Professor Syntilla Tusch (honest to God), to sort out the many pieces. Montego soon discovers a second mutilated body in the restroom near his office, that of Jake Bedloe, a former student who left Thornton under unpleasant circumstances. These are the first two murders ever on campus and both within a week. Are they connected? Montego is now accused of double MOM (motive, opportunity and means). Only his long friendship with the investigating police detective, a former student, keeps him out of jail to try to prove his innocence. Related and unrelated events, red herrings, conspiracies, drugs, and obscure clues tumble one on top of another leading to a confrontation and explosive and fiery climax that would do the Terminator proud. I see a screen play as the next step...perhaps with The Rock (Dwayne Johnson), Puff Daddy (Sean Combs) or Schemar Moore (of TV's *Criminal Minds*) - of course, each with hair and starring as Montego...

A portion of the novel (Chapter 1) and how to purchase it are on the Internet at <http://www.JohnTKWalsh.net>. Author Walsh's one-line asides are easily worth the price of the book. I highly recommend it.

About the author: Dr. James Walsh is a New Yorker by birth and Irish by temperament. He softened somewhat about the edges while earning a Ph.D. at Purdue and over three decades at John Carroll University in Cleveland, rising to and retiring as a full Professor of Chemistry. One, at times, does wonder, "How much of his gothic tale is autobiographical?" Mercifully, we can only speculate. He was a long-term member of the ACS Council and mounted sound but unsuccessful election campaigns for the ACS Board of Directors and later for ACS President-Elect (2006). Walsh now lives in Florida with his wife, Ann, enjoying a life without snow but dodging many more hurricanes. This is his first novel. He plans to publish his second novel "Nex Pro Bono" within months. It will also be set in the fictional Thornton University. For an advance of Chapter 1, check out his web site.

April 16th Family Science Night in Colma

Photos by Natalie McClure



Jeanette Medina and Santa Clara University volunteers set up Elementeo



George Lechner explains Mystery Powders to some students



Bruce Raby prepares the Mystery Powders Experiment



Bonnie Charpentier and Natalie McClure demonstrate paper chromatography

April 15th Dinner Meeting with Dr. Wiemer

Photos by Lois Durham



Karl Marhenke and Herbert Silber



Bruce Raby, Sally Peters and Dr. David Wiemer



David Wiemer and Natalie McClure



Howard Peters and John Perumattam



Howard Peters and Peter Rusch



Mark Kent and David Parker

CHEMEMPLOYMENT ABSTRACTS MAY 2009

CHEMEMPLOYMENT ABSTRACT 3934

Position Title: Senior Scientist - Protein Engineering

Job Description: The candidate will work with hands-on NMR data acquisition, processing and analysis, focused on assessing ligand-binding and analyzing the solution structures of proteins or protein/ligand complexes involved in modulating cell-signaling events of therapeutic interest.

QUALIFICATIONS DESIRED:

Education: This position requires a PhD in a relevant discipline.

Experience: The candidate must have at least three years of postdoctoral training. Industry experience in fragment-based small molecule drug discovery strongly preferred (Significant more working experience is required for Senior Scientist candidates). Senior candidates with experience participating in or leading multi-disciplinary structure-based drug design efforts are encouraged to apply.

LOCATION, SALARY, EMPLOYER DESCRIPTION:

Job Location: South San Francisco, CA

Employer Description: Genentech is among the world's leading biotech companies, with multiple therapies on the market for cancer and other serious medical conditions. Please take this opportunity to learn about Genentech, where we believe that our employees are our most important asset

Application Instructions: To learn more about this opportunity, please visit: <http://careers.gene.com> and reference Req. #1000021966. Please use "Web - ChemEmployment" when a source is requested. Genentech is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

What Would You Like to Do?

This is your Section of the ACS and I would like to know what sort of programs interest you, the members. Please contact me with your wishes. The following are some possibilities:

- Social meal only (breakfast, lunch or dinner)
- Talk/lecture only (topics); contact information for a speaker
- Meal and talk/lecture (topics and contacts)
- Family fun (picnic, bowling, etc.); what?
- Educational/tour event (lab, museum, etc.); what?
- What day/evening is best for you?; time?

Is there anything else you wish to share with me?
Thank you, Bruce Raby, Chair-elect 408-294-6718
or bruceraby@att.net



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Newsletter

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ChemPloyment Abstract

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FUTURE MEETINGS

- May 10-16** Intel International Science and Engineering Fair
Reno, NV
www.isefnevada.com
- May 20** BioScience Forum
Dr. Lynn Seely
Chief Medical Officer, Medivation
www.biosf.org/programs.htm
- May 24-29** Electrochemical Society
Annual Meeting
San Francisco, CA
www.electrochem.org/meetings/biannual/curr_mtg.htm
- Jun 28 - Jul 1** Northwest Regional Meeting
Tacoma, WA
www.chem.plu.edu/norm2009
- Jul 6-9** Organic Microelectronics and Optoelectronics Workshop V
San Francisco, CA
<http://acswebcontent.acs.org/organicmicroelectronic/index.html>
- Jul 11** Annual Wine Tasting and Award Presentation
Stanford University, Chemistry Department