

APPENDIX III

If you happened to notice a colleague plucking a leaf off a shrub in the Arboretum, gently squeezing it and then curiously sniffing the crushed leaf to detect the tell-tale signs of a volatile poison, or if you noticed him collecting a parcel of exotic seeds at the local postoffice and holding the bag with anticipatory glee, or if you were to attend one of his lectures in Biochemistry 101B while he was regaling his students with a delightful tale about a distinguished physiologist of the University of Chicago, you would be observing in action, ERIC E. CONN, the distinguished nominee for the Faculty Research Lecturer Committee of the Davis Division of the Academic Senate for 1976-77.

Born on January 6, 1923, in the small town of Berthoud, Colorado, Professor Conn received his A.B. degree in Chemistry cum laude from the University of Colorado in 1944, left Boulder for Oakridge, Tennessee, where he served as a Corporal in the U. S. Army, and then in 1946 entered the University of Chicago to work for a Ph.D. degree in Biochemistry under the guidance of Professor Birgit Vennesland. In 1950, he obtained his degree and was appointed to an Instructorship in Biochemistry at the University of Chicago. Two years later he was persuaded to go West to accept the post of Instructor in the Department of Soils and Plant Nutrition on the Berkeley Campus of the University of California. While Assistant Professor in the Soils and Plant Nutrition Department, he accepted the call to move East once more and travelled a few hundred yards to the Department of Plant Biochemistry, housed in the Biochemistry and Virus Building on the eastern edge of the Berkeley Campus. After a few skirmishes with respiratory problems of plant tissues, he made the important decision to initiate studies on the metabolism of aromatic compounds in higher plants. His first paper in this series was published jointly with his first graduate student, now Chairman of the Department of Plant Pathology on the Davis Campus, Tsune Kosuge. In 1958, he once more travelled eastward to the Davis Campus where he was a decisive leader in the development of the new Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics. Three years later, with Dr. Jane Koukol, he discovered a new enzyme, phenylalanine ammonia lyase, which is now considered to be the key regulatory enzyme in phenylpropanoid metabolism in higher plants. At this time, he also became interested in the metabolism of cyanogenic glycosides and in the origin of cyanide as well as the detoxification of cyanide by plant tissues. In 1963 he published jointly with Dr. G. W. Butler, a visiting scientist from New Zealand, and with Dr. Shula Blumenthal, biochemist-jeweler extraordinaire, the remarkable observation that in plant cells, cyanide became a part of the important plant amide, asparagine. These basic discoveries have led Conn into an elegant series of papers exploring all facets of the origin and metabolism of cyanide and its important derivatives, cyanogenic glycosides, in the plant kingdom. As a result, Conn is unquestionably the leading authority in the world in this area of plant biochemistry.

Not only has he served as President of the Phytochemical Society of North America (1971-72), but he has also participated as an invited speaker at International Congresses of Biochemistry and Botany, has lectured throughout the world, served on numerous editorial boards, and federal study panels.

Not only research, but also teaching was an equal component of his academic interests. Already on the Berkeley Campus he had acquired the reputation as an outstanding teacher in Biochemistry. When he moved to Davis, he was given the sole responsibility of initiating and nurturing the basic course in biochemistry,

now known as Biochemistry 101A and B and which now requires the efforts of seven of his colleagues and himself! Realizing that a new type of textbook was essential as a backup for this basic biochemistry course, he co-authored with P. K. Stumpf Outlines of Biochemistry, which is now in its fourth edition and is used throughout the world. Because of his outstanding success as a teacher, he was awarded in 1973 the Distinguished Teaching Award of the Davis Academic Senate. Despite his very active research and teaching duties, he has, in addition, served as Chairman of his Department, accepted innumerable important committee assignments during his career on the Davis Campus, was Associate Dean of Biology in 1975, and has discharged all these duties with finesse and fairness.

We are, therefore, very pleased to honor PROFESSOR CONN, a most distinguished citizen of the University Community, as Faculty Research Lecturer of the Davis Campus for the academic year 1976-77.

Respectfully submitted,

R. W. Allard
E. G. Krebs
D. L. Olmsted
P. K. Stumpf
M. W. Thiebaud, Chairman