

December 8, 2009

MEMORIES OF PROFESSOR LUKE BERRY SHIRES

I first met Professor Luke Berry Shires in early 1943 when the Army of the United States decided that I should leave Cooks and Bakers training at Camp Barkley, Texas, near Amarillo and go instead to New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Mesilla Park, New Mexico to enter the Army Specialized Training Program in Engineering. I was so impressed with Prof Shires' teaching skill and the friendship he and Dad Jett showed to us GIs that I returned to A&M after the end of World War II to take a degree in Chemical Engineering

Prof Shires was a practical man and brought practicality to his profession. This was probably best illustrated by his description of a Chemical Engineer: "A Chemical Engineer is a glorified plumber with a dollar sign in his eye".

Prof brought his practicality to his teaching. My first realization of his practical trait was during a class in Stoichiometry and it was in this class that I first began to really understand what Chemical Engineering was all about. Prof Shires told the class simply that "In stoichiometry everything had to be accounted for and to come out even'. That is like Chemical Engineering, isn't it. Put all the other engineering disciplines efforts together to come up with a process for making a buck.

I especially enjoyed the wide array of interests in Prof Shires' life. He seemed to know a lot and could talk knowledgably on just about any subject being discussed. Especially intriguing was his vast interest in and love for the culture of Mexico. On his frequent trips into Mexico he gathered and brought back lovely example of Mexican art and craft works which he displayed in his home and discussed with us on occasions when we gathered there for visits. He instilled that interest in me and it has lasted a lifetime.

Prof Shires was a wonderful teacher and I learned a lot from him. It stood me in good stead during a long and successful career in the Petroleum Refining and Chemical Industries and I am grateful for his friendship and gift of knowledge.

Robert W (Bob) Davis, Class of 1949