

## Dr. Robert Conan: *Formula for Success*

Not many chemists can talk about their scientific discussions with Albert Einstein, but Robert J. Conan, professor of chemistry, can. In 1949, his first year at Le Moyne, Conan traveled to Princeton to meet with the celebrated scientist for two hours to discuss in considerable detail the Antonoff Law and theory. Both men discovered a mutual interest in music, and Conan says, "He had quite a sense of humor."

Conan recalls with fondness his early years at Le Moyne. He remembers particularly the first day he arrived on campus. "I am short and I remember walking into the building and being directed by June M. Manton, the college registrar, who said to me, 'Registration to the right.' 'But I'm a faculty member,' I protested. She looked at me for a few seconds and repeated, 'Registration to the right.' She didn't believe I was a teacher!"

When he arrived in his office, it was empty. He was told to furnish it with whatever he needed. "In addition to teaching, I had to build my own lab," he added. It was this freedom and flexibility that enticed Conan to remain at Le Moyne for 40 years. "The freedom to develop the chemistry program in a fashion that adhered to the American Chemical Society (ACS) standards, permitted the individual teacher in the department to give one or more courses in their area of specialization," said Conan. "The college never tried to tell us what to teach or how to teach. It was their way of saying, we trust you." In 1964 the college received accreditation from ACS, an accomplishment that fulfilled Conan's longstanding ambition for the college.

Noted chemist, educator, consultant and researcher, Conan considers his major achievements to be teaching and research. His participation in ACS kept him current in his field and influenced his classroom instruction. His many leadership roles in ACS, chairman twice and a national councilor three times, allowed him to use his organizational skills. Being general chairman of the Northeastern Regional Meeting of ACS in 1979 was a challenge to Conan, but the success of the event outweighed the huge time commitment and work required.

As a researcher, Conan concentrated on his specialization in physical chemistry, thermodynamics and microwave spectroscopy at the University of Stockholm, Sweden; the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, Switzerland; and the University of South Florida.

Cited in "Who's Who in the East," "Who's Who in America," "Who's Who in Society" and "American Men of Science," Conan has served as president of the Technology Club of Syracuse, where he was instrumental in founding The Discovery Center of Science and Technology.

Conan's contributions to Le Moyne have not been limited to science. His love of classical music and aptitude for the keyboard prompted him to start and become the conductor of a symphony orchestra at Le Moyne 35 years ago. His other interests include ancient Roman coins and Irish genealogy. When asked to sum up his 40 years at the college, 22 of which he has served as chair of the chemistry department, Conan's answer was short and to the point, "It's been a great time." -EOH