



An Alumnus Synopsis

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From early high school my favourite subject was chemistry due to the excellent teacher we had at Randwick Boys School. Despite good Leaving Certificate results in chemistry for Year 9, I was the only one who elected to do Science as an approach to Medicine or Engineering.

I was more an 'also-ran' compared with those who went on to be Professors of Chemistry but the pursuit of anything chemical held fascination and interest which led me to be one of the few science students to do Materice Medicine in 2nd Year and Pharmaceutical Science in 3rd Year, along with Chemistry I & II respectively. This led to a Masters in Pharmaceutical Science while enjoying demonstrating to 1st year chemistry students.

By the time I concluded the MSc, I felt that teaching was more rewarding than research so I taught at North Sydney, a private school for 4 years before being successful in obtaining a Fullright to do a PhD in the USA. This entailed applied research in Agricultural Chemistry which I found more relevant than seeing how you could improve the yield from a particular reaction.

On returning to Australia I took a job as Lecturer in Chemistry at Teachers' College and became involved in the State Science Teachers' Association, arranging conferences and workshops to involve university staff to provide insight and encouragement for Secondary School chemistry.

During this time, I came across a text on Overhead Chemistry Demonstrations which was an excellent list published by the American Chemical Society. There are numerous spectacular experiments producing colours, odours, matter changes and other chemical mysteries which could all be related to sound chemical reactions. Much of what was done then is forbidden for questionable health reasons now – regrettably so!

Being in a tertiary institution has many challenges to keep the brain active, not the least of which was invitation to teach chemistry to health science students. This chemistry had to be relevant to their professional growth and not obviously for chemistries sake. This took me to Western Australia for a year's sabbatical to learn some human biology so I could have a better understanding of what would be relevant for health science students. This was a year of academic stimulation leading to the challenge of doing medicine which I found less abstract than science and more recall of facts than what I was used too. Despite my age and having 3 children at primary school, I managed to be given permission to practice medicine and had my first paid consultation at the age of 41.

Chemistry helped me appreciate the structures and to some extent the mode of action of many drugs to the extent that endocrinology became of interest over other areas of medicine. Over the next 25 years through General Practice and hospital Consultant appointments, I have wound back my private practice to put back hopefully into the tertiary system what it was generous to offer me. Teaching medical under graduates and post graduates is a pleasure and a challenge all thanks in no small measure to the under graduate chemistry at Sydney University.