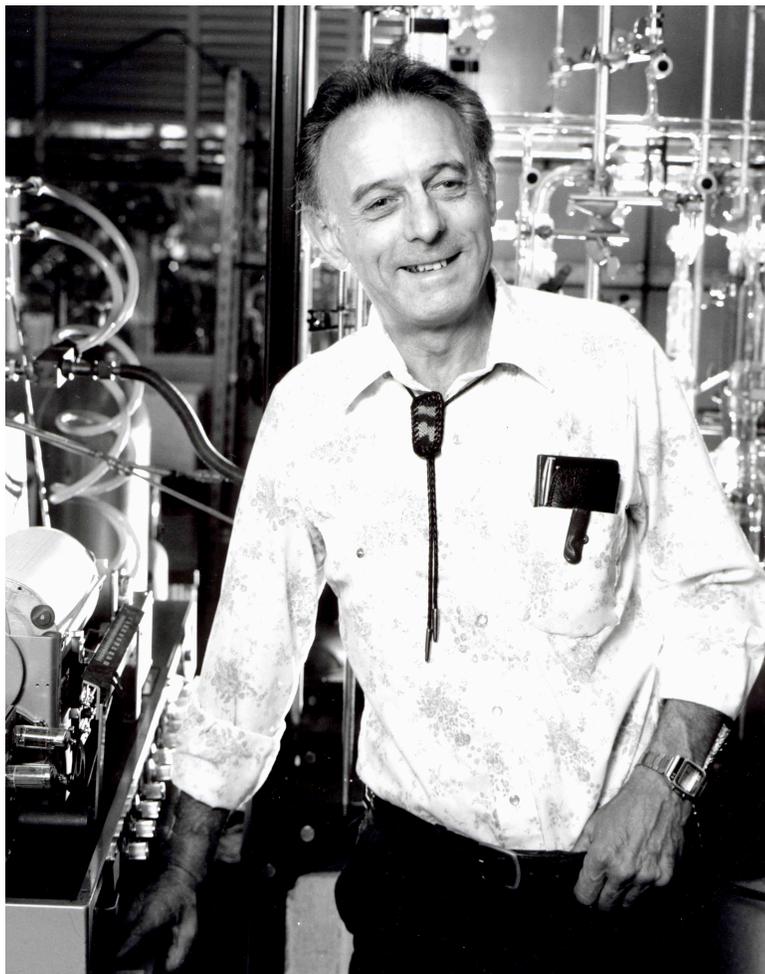


NATIONAL CHEMISTRY WEEK - HOW IT ALL BEGAN

When? In 1987 – twenty years ago! **Where?** Right here in the Bay Area!

Who? George Pimentel, a chemistry professor at UC Berkeley, and President of ACS in 1986, was deeply concerned with the public image of chemistry. He proposed National Chemistry Day and got the ACS to agree to seven pilot programs that year, organized by local sections, because he felt that “public service at the local level is ... our most effective means of convincing the public at large of the importance of chemistry in advancing and protecting our quality of life.” The favorable response led to the first National Chemistry Day being celebrated all over the country in 1987, enthusiastically supported by the 1987 ACS president, Mary Good.



George knew that the California Section would put on a great show, with people like Attila Pavlath and Sam Markowitz in charge, so he decided to do something extra at the University. He chose the Lawrence Hall of Science as the venue for a daylong program for students and teachers. He also organized special public lectures in the evening by stars of the chemistry faculty, Angelica Stacy and John Hearst.

George himself talked about the publication that same year of the book “**Opportunities in Chemistry Today and Tomorrow**” ([link](#)) based on the so-called “**Pimentel Report**.” The National Research Council had commissioned this report to inform Congress about the status of chemistry in general and the most fertile areas of chemical research. The new version was shorter and less technical, geared toward high school and college readers, and the general public. It was co-authored by George’s daughter, Jan Coonrod ([photo link](#)), a high school science teacher, and its whimsical vignettes featured the effect of new chemistry research on everyday life. On that first National Chemistry Day, 400 copies were distributed free to science teachers.

Like all good scientists, the ACS people took time to review the data from their experiment, and launched the first annual National Chemistry **Week** in 1989.

Sadly, George was not there to see it – he died of cancer in June 1989. But how happy he would be to know that his idea has flourished and continues to introduce people young and old to what he called “this wondrous world” of chemistry.

And, two of the key participants in that first event in Berkeley, Angelica Stacy and Jan Coonrod, are now collaborating on another chemistry book – or rather, a new high school curriculum -- “**Living By Chemistry** ” (link).

Happy National Chemistry Week!

For more about George Pimentel and his continuing influence in chemistry, go to <http://georgecpimentel.tripod.com>

-- Jeanne Pimentel

National Chemistry Week went truly national in 1997. Our NCW Coordinators worked with the community to organize our first Family Science Night at Orinda Intermediate School. This event drew over 1000 participants, and was recognized by an ACS ChemLuminary Award. The California Section has gone on to co-sponsor a Family Science Night event every year since:

1997 Orinda Intermediate School
1998 Albany Middle School
1999 Piedmont Middle School
2000 Bret Harte Middle School (Oakland)
2001 King Middle School (Berkeley)
2002 Wood Middle School (Alameda)
2003 Winton Middle School (Hayward)
2004 Elmhurst Middle School (Oakland)
2005 Aptos Middle School (San Francisco)
2006 Willard Middle School (Berkeley)
2007 Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School (Moraga)
2008 Oak Grove Middle School (Concord)
2009 Bret Harte Middle School (Hayward)
2010 Claremont Middle School (Oakland)
2011 Helms Middle School (San Pablo)
2012 King Middle School (Berkeley)
2013 Thornton Junior High School (Fremont)
2014 Helms Middle School (San Pablo)

Alex Madonik
NCW Coordinator
California Section
510-872-0528 mobile
<alexmadonik@sonic.net>