

Robert F. Raffauf



Robert F. Raffauf, 85, professor emeritus of pharmacognosy and medical chemistry at Northeastern University, died on Sept. 5, 2001 in St. Petersburg, Fla. Born in Buffalo, N.Y., Raffauf completed a B.S. at the City College of New York in 1936, and an M.A. at Columbia University in 1937. He then traveled to the University of Minnesota to obtain his Ph.D. in pharmaceutical chemistry in 1940. Following postdoctoral studies in Switzerland, he began his career at SmithKline & French in 1950. Over the years, he explored New Guinea, India, the Amazon River Basin, and many parts of Africa for medicinal plants. In 1968, his program was terminated and he began a new career in academic pharmacy at Northeastern. Following his retirement in 1990, he moved to Florida and continued to educate others about medicinal plants and rain forest environments as a member of the Academy of Senior Professionals at Eckerd College. He was the author of eight books, four patents, and numerous scientific publications and reports. Joined ACS in 1939; emeritus member. *C&EN obituary*



with Melvin Shemluck, former graduate student



with Tom Zennie, former graduate student, Thanksgiving 1998



with his wife Heidi



with his wife Heidi



with Dick Schultes

Some of Dr Raffauf's professional accomplishments were in the area of Natural Products Chemistry and the resultant isolation and identification of important and novel medicinal compounds from plants. As a university professor for almost twenty years he taught medicinal chemistry, pharmacognosy and phytochemistry to hundreds of students. He was an excellent teacher and lecturer and is a pleasure to listen to speak. He was the author of one of the most definitive books on plant alkaloids, which can be found in virtually all chemistry libraries today. He recently co-authored a number of books on the chemistry and ethnobotany of rain forest plants; describing research and observations about medicinal plants of the Amazon he and others had done decades before it became fashionable to do so. Dr Raffauf was also been employed in the pharmaceutical industry for a number of years before his appointment at Northeastern University. After his retirement as professor emeritus, he did a lot consulting in the biotech and natural products industry.

His research, writing and lectures caused an increase in attention to be given to the dwindling ecosystem and loss of habitat of the rain forests around the world. He was also instrumental in detailing the importance of the natural world as a valuable resource for medicines. He was a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a Research Associate of the Botanical Museum of Harvard University

He liked the smell of pyridine! Nobody I know would ever have the same opinion.
He used gasoline instead of hexane and vodka instead of EtOH for TLC's when he was in the rainforests and back country doing his ethnobotanical explorations around the world.

He was one of the past presidents of Economic Botany 1969
He was a master of devising field tests for chemical constituents and he still had a bench that he used almost daily until he left.

He had prostate cancer about 8 years ago and had it removed and was in complete remission when I last talked to him near Christmas 2000. When I first found out that he had his prostate removed, I told him how sorry I was that he had to have

an operation. All he said was: "I didn't need the damn thing anyway"
---Dr. Tom Zennie, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Holland, MI

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