



Robert F. Benson, a research chemist at the Marine Science College of the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, died on July 15 of a heart attack. He was 61.

Benson, a native of Pennsylvania, received his BS Chemistry degree from the University of Florida and his M.S. from the University of South Florida. Subsequently he worked as a research chemist with Texaco in Port Arthur, Texas, 1967-70, applying Physical Chemistry to the improvement of oil refining techniques and catalyst development. He extended his work on solid catalyst supports in a position with the Alumina Division of Reynolds Metals in Bauxite, Arkansas before returning full time to complete his Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, in 1977.

Benson returned to Florida as a research chemist with the Jim Walter Corp., St. Petersburg, 1977-81, where he developed new methods for the production of mineral glasses for home insulation. With the advent of the shuttle program, Benson moved to the Aerospace Division of Honeywell Corporation in Clearwater where he was in charge of the surface analysis spectroscopy lab and problem solver for microelectronic contamination and chemistry of metal-ceramic joints.

From 1990 to 2001, Benson entered the teaching profession and served as a Chemistry Instructor at the University of South Florida, Tampa campus. He taught Instrumental Analysis, General Chemistry and the "Chemistry for Today" course that utilized the ACS *Chemistry in Context* textbook. His innovations in the majors' course included the introduction of the LABWORKS Interfaces for computer-assisted data acquisition and the assignment of senior course projects, which applied the instrumentation to real world problems of environmental pollution in the local area. Benson also conducted independent and collaborative research during this period particularly involving solutions of environmental problems related to phosphate mining in the State and means of improving yield from phosphate ores contaminated with magnesium, which he received a patent on. He created an awareness of environmental issues among the students in his classes, and through his long record of industrial experience, particularly with the petroleum industry, was a great resource for other faculty teaching the Chemistry for Today course involving chemistry in the context of environmental and energy issues.

Benson moved to his current position with the MEMS (Micro Electronic Miniaturization Systems) Laboratory of the Marine Science Institute in 2001. At the time of his death he was very involved in a NASA project developing new approaches for the economical production of hydrogen. Benson is survived by his wife Freda and three children. He had been a member of the ACS for over 30 years and had been the Chairman of the Pinellas County Subsection of the Tampa Bay local ACS Section for the past two years.

[Obituary courtesy of Dr. Joseph A. Stanko]