

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The newsletter continues to rapidly evolve. Both because of the reduction in production costs obtained by use of desktop publishing techniques and the decreasing emphasis on history of chemistry in more traditional chemical journals, such as the *Journal of Chemical Education*, it was felt that the time had come for the Division to attempt something more ambitious in the way of a publication. From now on the newsletter will be incorporated within the larger *Bulletin for the History of Chemistry* as the DIVISIONAL NEWS section. To avoid confusion with the old newsletter, which went through 19 issues, the *Bulletin* will begin fresh with a new numbering sequence. Hopefully, with this issue, we have finally reached equilibrium and any future changes will involve only increases in length and frequency of appearance, rather than changes in format.

The *Bulletin* is not intended to compete, either in terms of size or content, with established historical journals like *Ambix* and *Isis*. The vast majority of the members of the Division of the History of Chemistry are practicing chemists and teachers of chemistry who enjoy reading general interest articles on the history of chemistry but are prevented by other duties from engaging in full-time historical research. Their interest in history is more that of chemists wishing to add a time dimension, as well as a depth-of-content dimension, to their appreciation and understanding of chemistry, than that of historians seeking to resolve social and philosophical questions through historical research. The intent of the *Bulletin* is to serve this audience by means of short entertaining articles and vignettes, usually in the form of a continuing column organized around a central theme.

In keeping with this goal, several new columns have been added to those already initiated in earlier issues of the newsletter. These include **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...?**, which explores concepts, techniques, and examples which were once a standard part of the textbook literature but have since disappeared; **CHEMICAL ARTIFACTS**, which will catalog historically interesting equipment, photographs and other chemical memorabilia located in various chemistry departments throughout the country; a series on the history of the Dexter Award by Aaron Ihde of the University of Wisconsin; and, finally, **TRANSLATIONS**, which will challenge readers to exercise their ingenuity in unravelling "the chemistry behind the chemistry" of yesteryear.

In the future, we hope to add a **FACES FROM THE PAST** column, featuring concise biographical portraits of famous chemists; a **BONES AND STONES** column, featuring entertaining vignettes for members of the Archeological Subsection; and a series on the history of the Division itself by James Bohning of Wilkes College. Because of severe space restrictions, most contributions to

the *Bulletin* are currently by invitation. Nevertheless, readers are encouraged to bring materials which might be suitable for any of the current columns to the attention of the editor.

William B. Jensen, University of Cincinnati

LETTERS

The **DIVERSIONS AND DIGRESSIONS** column in the History of Chemistry Newsletter has provided welcome additions to my collection of articles on elements. As a high school chemistry teacher, these articles spice up what could otherwise be a prosaic recitation of elements of representative families. Thank you for including tantalizing examples of what history of chemistry is all about. I have especially appreciated the inclusion of equations for relevant reactions and the substantial quotations from primary sources. Derek Davenport's article on fluorine and the article on phosphorus provide respectable benchmarks for future **DIVERSIONS AND DIGRESSIONS**...

In the Fall 1987 Newsletter you note that some of the essays are reprints of works initially published in *ChemMatters*; consequently they may lack some of the "meat" expected by a professional historian or chemist. Would it be too much to ask that all future essays note the approximate dates of key experiments, publications, etc ... A short bibliography would also be helpful. Thank you for including such useful, interesting articles in the newsletter.

Judy Smith, Austin TX

TRANSLATIONS

The following experiment is taken from Tiberius Cavello's "A Treatise on the Nature and Properties of Air", published by the author in London in 1781. Readers wishing to submit their interpretation of the chemistry involved, complete with balanced equations, should send their answers to the editor by the copy due date listed inside the front cover. Answers will appear in the next issue along with a fresh puzzle.

To inflame Regulus of Antimony by means of Aqua Regia: Let a common vial, such as apothecaries more commonly use, be about half filled with aqua-regia, made with four parts of nitrous and one part of marine acid. These acids should be very strong. Then take powdered regulus of antimony, and drop it gradually upon the aqua-regia; keep the hand that holds the powder a few inches above the vial. It will be found that the particles of regulus take fire, and sparkle like a flint and steel, before they touch the surface of the aqua-regia, viz. by only passing through its vapours.