

Memorial Resolution

Stephen I. Sallay
1920-1986

Professor of Chemistry
Director, Research Institute for Cancer Detection

Professor Sallay was born in Kiskundorozsma, Hungary, on July 1, 1920. He received his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Szeged, Hungary. The 1956 Hungarian Revolution caused his flight from his native land, and he emigrated to the United States in 1957. He became a U.S. citizen in 1962 and came to IPFW in 1969.

During his career, Professor Sallay had the good fortune to work in the laboratories of two Nobel laureates: He was an assistant professor at the Institute of Nobelist A. Szentgyorgyi at the University of Szeged from 1952 until 1956 and a research fellow with R.B. Woodward of Harvard University from 1957 until 1958. Later, as a group leader in medicinal research at Wyeth Laboratories, Philadelphia, between 1958 and 1969, he developed a novel procedure for the synthetic preparation of certain naturally occurring iboga alkaloids which are pharmacologically efficacious as central nervous system stimulants.

At IPFW, Professor Sallay was appointed chair of the chemistry department from his arrival in 1969 until 1971. He began his teaching, specializing in biochemistry and organic chemistry, and continued his research program. His first studies here, supported by grants from the Eli Lilly Company, involved the synthesis of analgesic compounds. Later, his research interests expanded to the synthesis of portions of viral proteins and the development and patenting of boron compounds with promise as flame retardants and wood preservatives. Professor Sallay approached these tasks as a classical synthetic chemist: His meticulous technique suggested that a true artist was at work.

At the time of his death, Professor Sallay was focusing his research on improving the accuracy of early cancer detection through the measurement of sialic acid concentrations in blood sera. His improvements on the standard assay led to issuance of a patent and to federal Food and Drug Administration approval.

In all, his scholarly accomplishments included approximately fifty papers and thirty-four patents. Recognition of his efforts included his being named by West Lafayette colleagues as a professor of medicinal chemistry in the School of Pharmacy.

In person, Steve was a classic European gentleman, comfortable in many different social settings. Always eager to discuss his chemical interests, he could expand with equal vigor upon his anti-Communist political philosophy, university affairs, or the news of the day. He seemed at ease before an audience of executives or of chemists, translating his discoveries into terms which all could appreciate. He chatted as easily with President and Mrs. Kurt Waldheim during a chance encounter on a Vienna sidewalk.

Stephen Sallay will be missed. His university colleagues extend their sympathy to his wife, Maria; his son, Peter; and other family members.