

CARROLL WARDLAW GRIFFIN

1900 - 1959

Carroll Wardlaw Griffin died on May 4, 1959 after twenty-seven years of service at Vassar College. The faculty record his sudden and untimely death with a keen sense of loss and a deep appreciation for what he did for the college during these years. Almost half his life was spent as a member of this faculty and during this time, he so lived as to have gained the friendship and respect of his colleagues, his students and his friends in the community outside of the college.

He began his teaching in the South after graduating from Clemson College in South Carolina. He studied at the University of Virginia where he earned the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. His particular field was analytical chemistry, though most of his research up to ten years ago had to do with the adsorption of gases by solids and with some phases of extraction equilibria. The soundness and worth of these studies have been recognized by investigators in the field of contact catalysis and analytical procedures, for one finds references to his researches in treatises on these subjects. His textbooks in analytical chemistry deal with both qualitative and quantitative aspects. They reveal his concern with the logical development of ideas and with the exact expression of them. At the time of his death, he was in the midst of preparations for a third book.

Carroll had a vital interest in his profession of scientist and teacher. His membership in various professional societies attests to this; he was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a member of Phi Lambda Upsilon and Sigma Xi, honorary scientific societies. As a member of the American Chemical Society, he did everything within his power to draw together chemists and chemical engineers of this community for the discussion and consideration of their common interests and problems. Carroll was one of the founders of the Mid-Hudson Section of the American Chemical Society, served as its second Chairman, and at the time of his death was a member of the High School Liaison Committee for promoting the teaching of science in high school. Membership in the American Association of University Professors was not a passive matter to him, for he had continuing interest in the actions of this organization and

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applauded any movement which tended to dignify the profession of teaching. That he cared about affairs at Vassar College was evidenced by his willingness to serve on many academic committees; and his long period of service as a member of the Committee on Research and finally as its Chairman demonstrated how devoted he was to doing the very best that he could for Vassar and the Vassar faculty.

Carroll Griffin's liking for people and his interest in teaching and research combined with his friendliness, humor and courage, made him a rare teacher. His present and former students, in letters which they have written in these last weeks, speak of their admiration and respect for him and the things for which he stood; and they describe him as we all know him. They all refer to him as "a fine man, an able leader, and a friend." They speak of his influence in stimulating an interest in chemistry and of what this interest has meant to them in their years at college and the years that followed. One of his graduate students writes of her "two good years at Vassar" and goes on to write "certainly I was a long way from being his most brilliant student but I doubt if any of the others derived more personal satisfaction from the accomplishment or a deeper respect for Carroll as a teacher and a friend." As an alumna put it, "I felt that when I really needed (to) talk, I could go to him. _He gave me much needed advice on many problems." Other students recall his spirit of fun and his humor. Still others recognized the demands that he made on himself and others to maintain what he considered to be a good way of life. One needs only to read such statements as the following to understand this. "He not only imparted his knowledge of chemistry to us but by his presence the knowledge of warmth and goodness in people "Those of us who have known him have benefitted from his uncompromising struggle for truth and honor and from his living example of patience and understanding." One cannot forget two totally different aspects of Carroll Griffin's personality. He got a great deal of pleasure out of some of the simple activities on campus and many people recall the fun that he had in taking a Very active part in the student-faculty baseball game on Founder's Day. Even more one remembers that Carroll could disagree with one and yet never lose a sense of friendship and regard for the other person.

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It seems fitting to close this Memorial Minute with his own words taken from the introduction to one of his books, an introduction on which he lavished much care, thought and time and in which unwittingly he characterized himself. "Here then is the opportunity for joy; the joy of finding the tasks which lie ahead worthy of the effort, the joy of constructing a pathway cleanly penetrating what was once strange land, and the joy of commanding new knowledge and new skills. Here, at last, we shall find the satisfaction that, having crossed this barrier, we are better seasoned for the further travels. And as each such barrier is met and crossed the disclosure becomes ever clearer that the ultimate goal

beyond is no mirage, but is reality itself,
worthy of all the labor – and all the joy."

Respectfully submitted,

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