

At a Meeting of the
Faculty of Vassar College
held
May twelfth, nineteen hundred
and seventy-six, the following
Memorial

was unanimously adopted:

Rudolf T. Kempton came to Vassar College in 1937 as Professor of Zoology and three years later was appointed Chairman of the Department. He held the degrees of B.S. from Bates College, M.A. from Columbia University and Ph.D. from New York University. Prior to his appointment at Vassar he had thirteen years of experience in research and teaching at New York University, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and Princeton University. He was a member of several professional societies and at different times was elected to national office in the Society of General Physiologists and the American Society of Zoologists.

Rudolf possessed great natural ability and a special personal charisma. He was a man of integrity and courage who would stand and fight, if need be, for justice, equality of opportunity for women and blacks, and other basic principles of a democratic society. He took special pride in being a member of the college volunteer fire department and he numbered among his friends most of the college workmen as well as faculty, administrators and students. Throughout his adult life Rudolf maintained an enthusiastic interest in people, teaching and research. He held firm beliefs in the value of a liberal arts education for women and of the importance of an understanding of biological concepts and research methods as an integral part of that education. For twenty-six years he taught a two-semester course in General Zoology. After the merger of the Departments of Zoology, Plant Science and Physiology he became one of the Directors of the new General Biology course. The major thrust of his teaching was the nature of scientific investigation and the interrelationship between fundamental research and application of knowledge to problems of the individual and society. He believed that students should see scientists as real people and not demi-gods cloistered in "ivory laboratories". Rudolf frequently illustrated his lectures with examples from his own research experience and that of his friends. Generations of zoology students fondly remember his stories about the great and near-great biologists with whom he associated during summers at the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory.

In addition to teaching, Rudolf served the College in important leadership roles. He was Chairman of the Department of Zoology for a total of twenty-two years. During the Presidency of Miss Blanding he served on the Advisory Committee for many years. Older faculty

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will remember when as Budget Representative he gave the faculty lucid explanations, complete with colored graphs, of the college budget. Rudolf took seriously his responsibility of representing

the faculty point of view in conferences with Miss Blanding. He was always ready to discuss a professional problem with any faculty member or to engage in general discussion of college issues. We all knew where and when to find Rudolf. Every morning after completing his eight o'clock class he would pick up his mail from the post office and then go to his unofficial "office", The Retreat. As he drank a second cup of coffee, friends or students joined him. These conversations, and sometimes heated debates, often extended the so called "office hour". Several times during his tenure at Vassar Rudolf was involved in planning for a new biology building. Before his retirement he saw the start of the plans that resulted in Olmsted Hall, but he never saw the completed building. Of equal importance in Rudolf's life were his teaching at Vassar College and his research, which was largely carried on at his beloved Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. Summers spent there were important to him intellectually and socially. He enjoyed the contact with fellow scientists, and the seminars and research conversations kept him abreast of what was new and exciting in biological research. The excellent library, laboratory and animal supply made his research activities a pleasure. He was a Trustee of the Marine Biological Laboratory for eighteen years and played an active role in the administration of the Corporation. Rudolf's research concerned the structure and function of the kidney. At the beginning of his career he was a member of research teams who pioneered in important research on kidney function. His own early work dealt with the chick embryo and species of amphibians, but he became especially interested in the Elasmobranch fishes and the role their excretory system plays in adapting the animal to its aquatic environment. Contrary to the hostile feeling about sharks and their relatives held by most laymen, Rudolf regarded these animals as the most fascinating in the world. Many of his publications were based on the relatively small dogfish shark. While on a Vassar Fellowship in 1955-56 he studied a variety of species of sharks, skates and rays at Marineland of the Pacific and Marineland of Florida. He is the author of numerous publications. During his later years at Vassar College and after his retirement, Rudolf began to compile a bibliography of the Class Elasmobranchii; unfortunately death came to him before he could complete this important monograph. During World War II Rudolf took a leave of absence to serve as teacher and panelist in the U.S. Army's Educational Program. In 1955-56 he taught physiology at the U.S. Army's Shrivenham American University in England. For seven months he, with other experts, toured U.S. Army bases in Europe discussing with the soldiers problems relating to sex. An outcome of this experience was a book, co-authored with Dr. Fred Brown, entitled "Sex Questions and Answers".

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This book, published by McGraw-Hill, became a 1950 Book of the Month alternate selection and was translated into Danish, Dutch and Portuguese. When he returned to Vassar, Rudolf initiated and

participated in the widely acclaimed Freshman Sex Panel. This was a question and answer session designed to give incoming students an opportunity for a frank and open discussion of sex. In many ways Rudolf was ahead of his time with respect to sex education. When Rudolf retired in 1967, after thirty years of service to Vassar College, he left a void in the Department of Biology and the College Community. Until his death in 1975, he maintained his contact with the community of biological scientists. Summers were spent as always in his home at Woods Hole and he continued to be active in the affairs of the Marine Biological Laboratory. Shortly before retirement he built a winter home in St. Augustine, Florida, near the Marineland. Rudolf was a devoted family man. Of greatest importance in his personal life was his wife, Elizabeth, his daughter, Laura, and his four grandchildren. His was a happy and active retirement until his terminal illness. Rudolf Kempton will long live in the memory of those of us who knew him.

Respectfully submitted,
Madelene E. Pierce
Joseph F. Mucci
Ethel Sue Lumb, Chairman