



Robert F. Rochelleau

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1920-1991

By Edwin A. Gee

ROBERT ROCHELEAU, a foremost authority on wastewater treatment and industrial water pollution, died on February 24, 1991, at the age of seventy. After spending essentially all of his adult life working in the fields of his expertise, Bob retired from the E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company as a highly valued principal division consultant.

Bob was clearly an expert on industrial waste treatment before the vast majority of his fellow engineers were aware of its national significance. Fortunately the entire field of chemical engineering was responsive to his pioneering. Under Bob's leadership, first DuPont, then the entire organic chemical industry was guided to reduce toxins and other wastes with emphasis on biological treatment. Benefits to society have been notable especially in the restoration of lakes and streams for recreational use.

Born in Penacook, New Hampshire, on December 28, 1920, he received his degree in chemical engineering from the University of New Hampshire in 1942. By that time the world was engaged in its second great war and Bob served his country as a captain in chemical warfare. He began his distinguished career with the New Hampshire Water Pollution Control Board as a senior engineer in 1946 and subsequently served as executive secretary of the West Virginia State Water Commission from 1949 to 1954 at which time he joined the Engineering Depart

ment of the DuPont Company. It was during his stay in West Virginia that he received his professional engineering license.

Bob's talents were quickly recognized by DuPont, and he moved rapidly to progressively senior assignments until he became a principal design consultant in 1971, one of only two engineers to reach this unique position at the pinnacle of DuPont's consulting organization. As such he was publicly recognized as an exceptionally qualified senior engineer, distinguished in his field. This expertise was further recognized in 1981 when he was elected a member of the National Academy of Engineering.

Throughout his career Bob was active in assisting government agencies in formulating sound regulations for attaining water purity. Adding to his early service in New Hampshire and West Virginia, he was an advisory member of the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission and a member of the Engineering Committee to the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. He was a member of several ad hoc committees of the Manufacturing Chemists Association working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the development of guidelines associated with the Clean Water Act. As a member of the National Water Quality Commission, Bob was an invaluable adviser to the EPA staff. His contributions figured prominently in the final report, which provided a basis for the revision of the Clean Water Act.

Industrially he is responsible for having developed process design criteria for the first complete mix biological treatment plant in the United States and the first industrial waste biological treatment plant at DuPont. He coauthored a paper on this accomplishment, "Systems for Handling Wastes from the Manufacture of Orlon® Acrylic Fiber," *Journal Water Pollution Control Federation*, 1961. During his career he was responsible for developing process design criteria for about twenty plants in the United States, Canada, and Europe. For ten years he was chairman of the DuPont Environmental Forum.

In 1965 Bob shared the Water Pollution Control Federation's (WPCF) Willem Rudolfs Medal for the outstanding published contribution on industrial waste control. His paper "An Industry

"Approach to Pollution Abatement" was published by WPCF in its October 1964 journal. He was selected for this prestigious award a second time for another coauthored paper, "Waste Treatment at a Complex Plastics Manufacturing Plant," in 1974. Although he was not an extensive writer, it is noteworthy that two of his three publications won awards.

Bob gracefully shared his hard-won expertise not only with associates but with competitors and governments. He is an example of how one engineer can favorably affect national welfare.

After a career centered on protecting the water, Bob and his wife retired on an island waterway near Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, where they enjoyed boating, fishing, music, and travel.