

## Symposium Aide Opportunities

Graduate students who plan to attend the 1993 Fall Meeting and are willing to assist in the symposium presentations by operating audio-visual equipment are encouraged to apply for a Symposium Aide position. MRS will pay the 1993 Fall Meeting student registration fee—plus a small stipend toward expenses—for symposium aides who work a minimum of four full half-day sessions. To request an application form and/or information, please contact Jane Stokes at MRS Headquarters:

Phone (412) 367-3003 • Fax (412) 367-4373.

## POSTERMINARIES



### Being Odd: Getting Even

If you've read more than you can stand about MRS's twentieth anniversary, it's time to skip to the ads on Covers Three and Four and then "file" this issue of the *MRS Bulletin* with its predecessors. But if you have the stomach for a last anniversary gasp, read on. Let's mine the real kernels of wisdom from the sage words of all the former MRS presidents which have appeared in recent issues and from the extended coverage in this issue as well. The obvious, blatant, and sweeping generalization is simply that practitioners of real relevant materials research (as opposed to departmental materials science and engineering) found themselves to be "odd men [sic] out" in the disciplinary societies and on the ledgers of disciplinary divisions of funding agencies in the 1960s. The desire to gain parity with traditional forms and forums, to "level the playing field" (borrowing a cliché from the lexicon of international trade), was predictably irresistible. They did not resist.

Perhaps "odd" is too tame a descriptor for a ragtag assemblage of disciplinary misfits—physicists who liked chemistry, chemists who liked metallurgy, uncivil mechanical engineers, and malleable ceramists who liked science. Heretics all! Is it any wonder that the normally forward-looking, flexible, imaginative federal agencies took a "wait-and-see" attitude toward proposals proffered by the likes of these groundbreaking crackpots? Think about it. University professors discovering the "relevance thing" in the midst of the "golden age" of pure science funding. Not the pseudo-relevance, spin-off thing we associate today

with elementary particles and the delegations of Texas and Tennessee\*, but the relevance *vérité* of materials. Wow!

By many measures, we all, i.e., the original and the recent lunatics alike, have pulled even and even passed the single disciplines to the point where our algorithms are imitated. (Remember! Imitation is tantamount to flattery from those who can't think of a better original idea.) But an anniversary is not only an occasion to reflect on our accomplishments. It is also, as Rustum Roy reminds us in this issue, an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to continued pursuit of our initial goals of odd-ball interdisciplinarity.

#### Force Feeding Fissiparousness

Roy boasts in one of his articles that materials research and, we therefore presume, the advent of MRS which we now celebrate, stopped and reversed the fissiparous paradigm of western science. In another article, he laments the relatively small numbers of MRS meeting participants that Symposium X attracts—to our mind a symptom of topical rather than subdisciplinary fissiparousness. We propose two remedies. The first is huge discounts on registration fees for meeting participants who attend all Symposium X sessions plus at least one other invited talk per day on a subject they care nothing about. The second is free subscriptions and no page charges in the *Journal of Materials Research* for authors whose papers span at least two top-

\*States chosen only for purposes of alliteration, of course.

ics and three disciplines and who intelligently include at least five literature citations to works from other fields. This should rehabilitate the interdisciplinary iconoclast in all of us and help MRS stave off pernicious attempts to topically "divisionalize" the Society for another twenty years.

#### Numerology

In the spirit of breaking with disciplines of the past, we question anniversaries, *per se*. Why is survival for an integral number of years a figure of merit? And why twenty years? The unimaginative would argue that we are inherently decimal beings in solar orbit, and there you have it. Phooey! Why not celebrate MRS's 250th "luniversity" next February, if we must be decimal and astronomical. The psychological roundness of numbers is numbing and limits our possibilities. Those who have experienced the exhilaration of reheating coffee for 37 seconds in a microwave oven know precisely what we mean. We shall save our discourse on the simultaneous roundness of traffic speed limits in both British and metric units and on other extraneous matters for another issue, as the subject goes far beyond anniversaries. Therefore, to paraphrase our most eloquent and distinguished legislators, who are also all experts in numerology, we yield back the balance of our space.

E.N. KAUFMANN

Note: The above musical phrase introduces "The Anniversary Waltz," words and music by Al Dubin and Dave Franklin, ©1941, Mayfair Music Corp. □