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Women 9, Men 4

Studying engineering in the late 1970s, I knew I was entering a male-dominated profession, where men outnumbered women by about ten to one. There were few female role models, and few opportunities to learn about the accomplishments of women chemical engineers. I later learned about some of the chemical engineers (and chemists who practiced chemical engineering) who received the Society of Women Engineers' (SWE) Achievement Award:

- Margaret H. Hutchinson (1955), the first woman to receive an ScD in chemical engineering from MIT and AICHE's first woman member, who designed the first commercial penicillin plant
- Désirée le Beau (1959), a pioneer in the field of rubber reclamation during World War II
- Nancy D. Fitzroy (1972), whose contributions spanned from heat transfer and fluid flow to properties of materials and thermal engineering
- Giuliana Cavaglieri Tesoro (1978), developer of an anti-static chemical for synthetic fibers and flame-resistant fibers who scaled up pilot plant results to commercial processes
- Nance K. Dicciani (1987), a research manager who influenced and directed the development of many new technologies
- Elsa Reichmanis (1993), who contributed to the design, synthesis, scaleup, and process engineering of new polymer resist systems used to manufacture integrated circuits
- Umit Ozkan (2002), a researcher in heterogeneous catalysis and a leader in engineering education.

In 2010, SWE presented its Upward Mobility Award, which recognizes an individual's rise to success and contributions to decision-making in her organization, to a chemical engineer: Gayle Roberts, P.E., president and CEO of Stanley Consultants. Roberts began her career there as a process engineer in 1981 and worked her way up through the ranks, assuming her current position in 2007.

A few months ago, AICHE Executive Director June Wispelwey posted "Famous Women Chemical Engineers" on ChEnected (AICHE's blog, <http://chenected.aiche.org>), where she cited several members of the National Academy of Engineering, as well as EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, current AICHE president Maria Burka, and Dianne Dorland, AICHE's first woman president (in 2003). She noted that one of the focal points of this year's celebration of the International Year of Chemistry (p. 61) will be on women in the field, such as Marie Curie, who received the Nobel Prize in chemistry 100 years ago (p. 72). And she expressed hope that we can increase the number of famous female chemical engineers.

With March as National Women's History Month and 2011 the International Year of Chemistry, let's take this opportunity to honor the countless achievements of women chemical engineers.

The percentage of women in chemical engineering is now nearly 20%, and some universities have reported undergraduate classes that are half women. On the AICHE staff, the women chemical engineers outnumber the male chemical engineers by more than two to one (specifically, nine to four). Yes, we've come a long way, baby. Let's celebrate!

Cynthia F. Mascone, Editor-in-Chief

