



Chicago Section IFT
the First Section



Know Your Emeritus Member: Tom Donnelly



Thomas H. Donnelly was born on April 20, 1928 in Endicott, New York. He received a B.S. in Chemistry from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1950 followed by a Ph.D. in Physical Biochemistry at Cornell University in 1955. Tom married Jean Marilyn Saunders in 1955 and together they had four children.

Tom joined the Swift & Company's R & D Center's Physical Chemistry Division on 1 Jun 1950. Swift research had envisioned a program of studying proteins so that their properties might be manipulated as fats and oils could be. They had purchased several instruments for the characterization of proteins.

Tom was hired because he had experience in operating these instruments. Since the structure of protein molecules is so different from the structures of fats and oils, protein characterization was not to be readily accomplished at that time. Tom believes that there are four truly functional proteins, namely, casein, actomyosin, egg albumin and gelatin, it is now possible that these might be synthesized by genetic engineering, but would it be possible to encourage consumers to purchase hot dogs made from actomyosin prepared by *e. coli*. Probably not, so it is likely that we must rely on natural sources of these proteins unless new methods of synthesis are developed.

With the transfer of Dr. F. Leo Kauffman, Tom became Division Head of the Physical Chemistry Division in about 1963. In about 1967, he became affiliated with the Gelatin Research Division. In late 1971, he was promoted to General Manager, Scientific and Service Divisions. While in this position, he oversaw the Swift interest in low calorie fats and oils. He was released from this position in 1978, when he became Division Head, Basic Research Division. He was released from this position in 1979 when the Division was eliminated.

He continued his food career as a reviewer for the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* until he basically dropped out of food chemistry, and took up genealogy and family history studies, which he still continues. He has been a member of the Chicago Section, Institute of Food Technology, since about 1955 and has continued as an Emeritus Member.

Tom also believes that the most outstanding and important action by Swift R&D to food science was to get approval for the addition of antioxidants to foods, which was obtained in about 1940.