

KNOW YOUR EMERITUS MEMBERS...

Richard I. Mateles



Current: Emeritus Member

I graduated in 1956 from MIT with a bachelor's degree in food technology and went on to receive master's and doctor of science degrees,. I joined the national IFT around 1956 and have been a member ever since. My career has been partly in academe and partly in industry. In 1959-60, I spent a post-doctoral year at the Laboratory for Microbiology at the Technical University in Delft, The Netherlands, and managed to visit many industry and academic labs in Denmark, Sweden, France, The Netherlands, and Italy engaged in biotechnology, industrial microbiology, and applied microbiology.

Following the post-doc, I was recruited by MIT to lead the biochemical engineering program, which I did until 1968. During this period, my students and I were active in research with numerous publications dealing with aflatoxin, continuous culture, tryptophan production by fermentation, oxygen transfer and heat transfer in fermentation, and single-cell protein. The program expanded with the addition of Arnold Demain, Daniel Wang, and Charles Cooney.

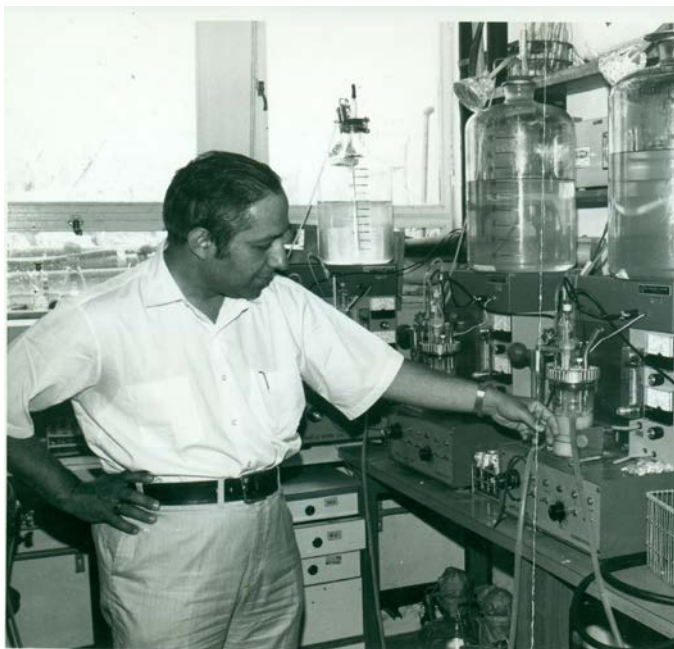
In 1968, I accepted a two year appointment to set up an applied microbiology department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel; and this was eventually extended to twelve years. I taught quite a bit including courses in food microbiology, biochemical engineering, elementary chemical engineering, industrial microbiology; and participated in courses such as microbial physiology. My research and that of my students expanded to look at mycotoxins other than aflatoxin, metabolites of actinomyces, plant cell culture, and continuous culture. I also was instrumental in forming a company, Makor Chemicals, to produce research chemicals and biochemicals, (among the first of which was aflatoxin), and ran a small unit affiliated with the university that carried out contract R & D in fermentation development for local industry.

In 1980, I returned to the U.S. I sought an academic position unsuccessfully since the

time constant for action at universities was too large. However, I was presented with a choice between a wonderful process development position at Merck and a broader position at Stauffer Chemical in which I would be responsible for directing R & D in many areas. I chose the latter and did not regret it! Stauffer was a major producer of pesticides; food ingredients including MSG, phosphates for cheese emulsifiers, polishing agents, leavening agents; seeds; specialty chemicals such as flame retardants, catalysts, synthetic lubricants, and Crystex; and commodity products such as phosphorus, chlorine, and regenerated sulfuric acid. When I joined, I knew little or nothing about some of these technologies, but I learned that the basic questions apply regardless of product or technology: What is the goal of the R & D? When can it bear fruit? What resources are required? Who are our competitors and where do they stand?

In 1988, Stauffer was terminally dismembered and divided among ICI, Akzo, and Rhône-Poulenc. I secured a position at IIT Research Institute running their Applied Sciences businesses and moved to Chicago. In 1990, a new president arrived at IITRI, and a year and a half later, I departed. As an academic, I had always had a considerable consulting activity, and I now devoted full-time to it. Most of my assignments dealt with helping companies improve their fermentation processes, evaluating R & D programs or projects in connection with acquisitions or investments, and providing expert testimony in patent or tort litigation.

My activity in the Chicago Section of the IFT has been limited to attendance at Section meetings, service for several years as a member and as chairman of the Tanner Award Committee, and a term or two as an Alternate Councilor. Some further biographical information is available from my website www.candidacorp.com.



Rich Mateles 1973