Tribute to Abner Brenner 1908–1999

Dr. Abner Brenner, retired chief of the Electrodeposition Section of the National Bureau of Standards (now the National Institute of Science and Technology), died August 13, just one week after his 91st birthday. Dr. Brenner was born August 5, 1908, in Kansas City, MO. He studied at the universities of Missouri, Wisconsin and Maryland. He received a doctorate from Maryland. In 1930, he joined the staff of the National Bureau of Standards, from which he retired in 1971.

After leaving government service, Dr. Brenner set up a one-man laboratory where he continued his research on the electrochemistry of nonaqueous systems. Among other projects, he developed a protective coating for acrylic paintings. He was the author of more than 100 papers and the recipient of more than 30 patents, the last of which he received at the age of 90. His two-volume *Electrodeposition of Alloys* is, in itself, a major contribution to the field. Published in 1963, it is still frequently referred to by electrochemists.

Dr. Brenner was the recipient of no fewer than 15 awards from the leading scientific societies in his field: the Electrochemical Society, the Institute of Metal Finishing and the AESF. In honor of his many contributions, the AESF established the Abner Brenner Awards, which are honoraria for the best papers published each year in *Plating and Surface Finishing*.

In 1961, Dr. Brenner was the recipient of the AESF's highest honor, the Scientific Achievement Award. He was also the first recipient (1974) of the Electrochemical Society's Award in Electrochemical Engineering and Technology.

Although many of his colleagues thought of him as an inventor and discoverer, he thought of himself as a "basic scientist; more specifically, as an explorative researcher—a person interested in investigating new phenomena." He was not bound by accepted doctrine or theory, but kept his mind open to the careful observation of his own creative experiments.

Dr. Brenner's influence was much more than intellectual in nature. His influence extended into the industrial and commercial world as others capitalized on his discoveries. Following his invention of a coating thickness gauge, many of these gauges came into extensive industrial use. Two additional well-known and useful instruments invented by Brenner were the spiral contractometer and the eddy-current thickness gauge. Of greater significance was his discovery of what is known as electroless nickel. This process was quickly taken over by electroplaters, and there is now a whole industry dependent upon it.

In addition to his interest in his own and his colleagues' research, Dr. Brenner was active in the affairs of the pertinent technical societies, serving on many advisory and editorial boards.

Dr. Brenner was married in 1936 to Sonja Persky and, after her death in 1964, he married Marcella Siegel Bernstein. His four sons all became scientists.

Respected not only by the members of the electrochemistry community, Dr. Brenner was especially respected by his colleagues. Working with him was not only fruitful, but also a great pleasure. He was at all times helpful and thoughtful—leading, not directing, his colleagues to think through the various problems of the particular research being explored. This was done with wisdom and good humor. His generosity in helping his associates was unbounded. P&SF

Editor's Note: This edited memoriam was prepared by Dr. Fielding Ogburn for *The Electrochemical Society Interface*.