



## Roger Parsons—Olin Palladium Award Medalist

F. C. Anson<sup>1</sup>

The Olin Palladium Medal of this Society has such a distinguished set of former awardees that I suspect the person who has been asked to introduce each of the medal winners has probably felt as superfluous as I do today.

Roger Parsons has played so prominent a role in the development of fundamental electrochemistry in the last thirty years that his name and his ideas constantly pop up in discussions among electrochemists in Moscow and Buenos Aires, Delhi and Paris, College Station and Pasadena.

The list of seminal contributions to the science that we owe to Roger Parsons is remarkable for its breadth as well as its length:

One of his very first papers—in 1951—on the mechanism of the hydrogen evolution reaction established what has come to be one of the classical methods for analyzing the kinetics of complex electrode reactions.

In the very first volume of what was to become the well-known series "Modern Aspects of Electrochemistry" there was a chapter by Roger Parsons on "Equilibrium Properties of Electrified Interphases." And though this topic has been treated by many different authors from very disparate points of view in the ensuing 25 years, this chapter has served as a commonly acknowledged point of departure.

Surely, no one has contributed more than Roger Parsons to our present understanding of specific adsorption at electrode surfaces and of the fine structure of the electrical double layer. Electrochemists may still argue over whether potential or charge is the best variable to hold constant in constructing electro-sorption isotherms but there is no disagreement about the important and insightful role Roger played in helping to bring some order into what had been a very confused field.

One of the attributes that has served Roger exceedingly well throughout his career has been an ability to confront each newly proposed reaction mechanism or novel-sounding idea with the constraints imposed by electrochemical thermodynamics. Those of us who had troubles with new terms such as "electrosorption valency" or "partial charge transfer" took no little pleasure in reading Roger's definitive chapter which showed how these were merely freshly coined names for well-known thermodynamic parameters.

This example also involved another of Roger's special attributes—he manages to be penetrating and critical of the ideas of others without offending them—a rare enough talent in many electrochemical circles, as meetings such as this sometimes demonstrate. Roger's Ph.D. professor has fondly recalled the days at Imperial College in the late forties and fifties when the electro-

chemistry group contained many superb young scientists, including Roger, who engaged in hot, spirited arguments. And disagreements were not always expressed in courteous or dispassionate language. Roger did his graduate work in the midst of this group but he came away with no detectable tendency to be contentious just for the fun of it. When Roger rises to ask questions or make comments at meetings the result is typically illumination unaccompanied by friction or superciliousness.

Roger is a vegetarian, and some have suggested that he is such a pleasant professional colleague because orneriness requires blood in the diet. But whatever its origins, Roger's winning style has won him both respect and admiration from his colleagues and this has stood him in particularly good stead in his role as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Electroanalytical Chemistry* since 1963. Under his leadership, this *Journal* has become perhaps the leading international journal for the publication of papers in fundamental electrochemistry.

Roger was a member for 25 years of the physical chemistry department in the University of Bristol in England from where he published most of the papers that established his international reputation in both electrochemical thermodynamics and kinetics.

In 1977, Roger moved from Bristol to Paris to accept an invitation to assume the directorship of the Laboratory of Interfacial Electrochemistry of the French National Research Center—the position he presently occupies. His English friends and colleagues greatly regretted Roger's decision to move to Paris, primarily because of the resulting loss to the electrochemical enterprise in England. But, also, I suspect, because of the agonies they felt in having the delights of French cuisine wasted on a vegetarian. However, there was no need for such regrets as anyone who has savored the delicious vegetarian cooking of Roger's lovely wife Ruby can attest.

Electrochemistry in England is the poorer for Roger's move, but the new and exciting work he has initiated in France on fundamental electrochemical studies at noble metal and semiconductor electrodes suggests that international electrochemistry will continue to benefit from his insight and expertise.

The list of former recipients of the Olin Palladium Medal includes many of those who have made signal contributions to the science of electrochemistry in this century. It seems to me both natural and altogether fitting that a group which includes such well-known electrochemists as Bonhoffer, Wagner, Frumkin, Gerischer, Delahay, and Levich should now be joined by Roger Parsons.

Madame President, it is my honor to present to you the winner of the Olin Palladium Medal for 1979—Roger Parsons.

<sup>1</sup> Introductory remarks by F. C. Anson, Arthur A. Noyes Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, on the occasion of the presentation of the Olin Palladium Medal Award to Roger Parsons on October 16, 1979, at the Los Angeles Meeting of the Society.