From the September 1, 2006 *Tech Today*

**Doc Berry Dies**

Legendary professor Myron “Doc” Berry of Hubbell, who taught chemistry to thousands of baby-boom generation Tech students, died Aug. 29 at the age of 87.

Berry came to the university in 1955. From 1960 to 1980, he directed the freshman chemistry program, retiring in 1984.

“He indeed was a legend,” said Professor Emeritus Les Leifer, who joined the chemistry faculty in 1966. “He was devoted to teaching and devoted to his students.”

He was also tough. Peter Catellino, director of the YES Expo and educational programs, was one of the lucky ones who only had to take Berry’s first-year chemistry course once. “My chemistry teacher at Kingsford High knew how Doc Berry taught, and he taught high school chemistry the same way, so we’d be prepared,” Cattelino remembers. “They called it ‘The Eliminator’--it was the weeding-out class.”

However, Berry went mile after extra mile to help his struggling students master the most challenging material they’d ever tackled. “He opened his home for students and would help us with chemistry in the evenings,” Catellino remembers. “His wife would bake cookies. He was a really crusty, crotchety, zero-tolerance kind of guy--and he smoked like a herring--but he had a heart for his students.”

Berry was born May 24, 1919, in Franklin, N.H. He was valedictorian of Filton Boys School in 1936, received a BA from Colby College in 1940, an MS from Harvard in 1942 and a PhD from Syracuse University in 1951.

He joined the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity in 1937 and was instrumental in establishing its Michigan Tech chapter, in 1979. He also served on the Tau Kappa Epsilon Board of Directors.

Berry’s stature among his former students is nothing short of towering. “The amazing thing for me has been that any alum who graduated while he was here asks me, 'Is Doc Berry still around?'” says Sarah Green, chair of the chemistry department. “I never saw him in the classroom, but what he did was memorable.”

Chemistry Professor Emeritus Fred Williams, also a veteran teacher of freshman chemistry, remembers his colleague’s powers of total recall. “He had a fantastic memory,” Williams said. “One of our former ME professors got his bachelor’s degree here, went to Cal Tech, came back here, and ran into Doc Berry. Berry asked him, ‘How’s Sam?’”

The new faculty member was baffled. Who was Sam?
“Berry said, ‘He sat next to you in class,’” Williams said. “It was just unbelievable.”

Berry received the Clair Donovan Award for Outstanding Service and the university’s Distinguished Teaching Award. “I went to his last lecture, just to say I’d been to one,” Williams said. “I wasn’t the only one; a number of faculty and other students who weren’t taking his class also showed up.”

It was an interesting lecture, as much for its conclusion as its content. Apparently wishing to fade away into the sunset, “he had set up Fisher 135 so he wouldn’t have to pass through the crowd when he left the room,” Williams said.

President Glenn Mroz visited with Berry at the 2005 Alumni Reunion. “By his own estimate, he said he had about 20,000 students,” Mroz said. “He was one of the first really challenging instructors that students had, and he taught a class that was relatively difficult in the first term of your freshman year.”

Mroz, who graduated from Michigan Tech in the 1970s, was among those who experienced Doc Berry first hand. “He came off as a tough guy, but if you talked with him, he was always willing to help out,” he remembers. “He’d hold help sessions at his house.”

Berry’s reputation as an exterminator was further cultivated by the juniors and seniors who’d already clawed their way through chemistry. “When first-year students had to take their first chemistry exam, they’d come out of Wadsworth Hall and spread out all over campus,” Mroz recalls. “The older students would put their speakers out of their window and play ‘Another One Bites the Dust.’”

“It takes someone special to engage students in those big, hard courses,” Green noted. “The students start out thinking they know everything, and you have to teach to everybody in the room, with all their different backgrounds and different expectations.”

Years after his retirement, “he was charming and sharp,” Green says. “I was thinking about asking him to come back to teach a class.”

In 1973, Berry and his wife, Betty, bought the Keweenaw Agate Shop in Copper Harbor and ran it every summer until 1988. He was active in the Houghton Masonic Lodge and a charter member of the Houghton County Historical Society.

The couple had three sons, Myron Henry (Diane) of Iron Mountain, John (Scarlet) of Lake Linden and George (Christian) of West St. Paul, Minn., and 10 grandchildren.