

A Bit of History ... by Mari de Wit

This month's spotlight is on Charles Edward Kenneth Mees who served as our local ROSA president in 1922. C. E. K. Mees was born on May 26, 1882. He was Eastman Kodak's first director of research. In 1918, Dr. Mees wrote a letter to George Eastman about a critical situation facing American chemistry. War had shut off Germany as a supplier of synthetic organic reagents, and the only American source was a small laboratory at the University of Illinois. Dr. Mees said, "The continuance of effective research in pure organic chemistry is largely dependent upon the establishment of a satisfactory source of synthetic organic reagents. No such source is at present in sight.... Unless something is done immediately, organic research will languish...." He proposed establishing a nonprofit department of synthetic chemistry as part of the Eastman Kodak Research Laboratory. Mr. Eastman simply noted "Approved." This was the one word that launched Kodak into the chemistry business.

Charles Edward Kenneth Mees
May 26, 1882 - August 15, 1960



Dr. C.E.K. Mees, circa 1912

Served as OSA-RS president: 1922

Some curious bits of info regarding Dr. Mees...

Famous Quote: "If cows didn't like mustard we couldn't go to the movies"

This quote is from C.E.K. Mees. The great 20th Century film emulsion expert, a fascinating man (how many people have a crater on the moon named after them?). Apparently Dr. Mees noted that gelatin made from cows that ate hot tasting plants yielded better quality gelatin which gave the films a higher sensitivity.

C.E.K. Mees Medal: This award was established in 1961 in memory of C. E. K. Mees, who contributed preeminently to the development of scientific photography. It is presented biennially to a recipient who exemplifies the thought that "optics transcends all boundaries," interdisciplinary and international alike.



Interesting historical fact: <http://www.trivia-library.com/b/story-behind-inventors-and-inventions-color-film.htm>

Mees Observatory: The University of Rochester has an astronomical observatory named after Dr. Mees located in Bristol, New York. For more information: <http://www.pas.rochester.edu/urpas/page/mees> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._E._K._Mees_Observatory.

9 Sep 1953: Presentation dinner for Dr Mees (Left to Right 3rd standing) for his 2nd Gold Medal from the Royal Photographic Society.



2nd Gold Medal, presentation dinner

Short Biography:

- See "<http://rsbm.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/7/172.full.pdf+html?sid=f4edfd04-33b1-4b3c-8e1c-b11deb4557ac>" for a very detailed biography.
- In 1912 the Eastman Kodak company acquired Wratten and Wainwright Co. because they were interested in the skills Mees provided. He moved to the United States and set up the Kodak Research Laboratories in Rochester, New York, and became the first director.
- Later he was named vice president in charge of Research and Development for Eastman-Kodak, and remained at that position until he retired in 1955.
- International Photography Hall of Fame inductee



Links/Papers:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Mees
- http://image.eastmanhouse.org/files/GEH_1961_10_01.pdf
- http://www.iphf.org/Hall_Of_Fame/Inducties_Bios/Dr_C_E_Kenneth_Mees_Bio.html
- <http://www.croydoncameraclub.org.uk/ClubArchiveHome/ClubArchiveMees/MeesOrbituary/MeesOrbituary.htm>
- http://www.croydoncameraclub.org.uk/ClubArchiveHome/ClubArchiveHistory2000/ClubArchiveHistory2000_041.htm
- Book: Some Photographic Aspects of Sound Recording (<http://journal.smpte.org/content/24/4/285.abstract>)
- Book: The Path of Science. 1946 (<http://www.archive.org/details/pathofscience00mees>)
- 1920: Book: "The Organization of Industrial Scientific Research," reporting a survey of the National Research Council, which counted 462 US companies with 9350 workers engaged in research.
- A 1100-page tome compiled by the legendary director of Kodak's research section; also the guy who hired "God & Man" (Leopold Godowsky, Jr. and Leopold Mannes) to invent Kodachrome.