



Gift Horse

In this issue of *Interface*, (see page 9) there is a news item about Robert Dean Hancock, Founder and CEO of the Micromanipulator Company, who bequeathed to ECS a large block of his stock and \$208,000 in cash, making it the largest gift in our history. This type of

gift is added to the endowment funds that support the ECS education and publication programs, which directly further the mission of the Society. Dr. Hancock was not a preeminent figure in the Society; in fact, he was not a member of ECS. His company created leading edge analytical probe stations and accessories for semiconductor probing professionals, which made him an active participant in our technical interest areas. That is certainly an extraordinary gift from an individual who was not even a member, so I asked the executor of his estate why Dr. Hancock was so generous in his bequeath to ECS.

After years of development work for ECS, I have certainly learned to appreciate any gift to our cause and normally do not “look a gift horse in the mouth,”* but I was compelled to know more about the man who made the largest gift in our 109 year history. I was told by his friend and executor that Dr. Hancock recognized the important role ECS played in the advancement of electrochemistry, and he “liked the *Journal*.” The answer was wonderfully simple and yet profound; and it reinforced both the importance of our mission and the value of giving to ECS.

The Electrochemical Society, Inc. (ECS) is a charitable organization chartered under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code, which is the same classification as a church or institute of higher education, and it enables the same type of charitable tax deductions. Some constituents have misinterpreted the *Inc.* (Incorporated) to identify ECS as a profit-making enterprise, but incorporation in the United States does not define the mission nor the tax status of an organization. ECS was incorporated in 1930, owns assets including real estate as investments for our endowment funds, and manages highly professional meetings and publications, all of which might create the impression that we are a commercial enterprise in an industry dominated by profit-making publishers.

* “Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth” is an old English proverb first published in 1546 in John Heywood’s volume entitled, “A dialogue containyng the nomber in effect of all the prouerbes in the Englishe tongue,” and it means that it’s ungrateful or rude to ask questions when you receive a gift.

ECS is very different than our commercial competitors and, like a university or a church, we are dependent on donations and sponsorship to operate as a nonprofit organization. We have been operating with the assistance of charitable gifts since 1928, when Edward G. Acheson funded our first major award, which was named in his honor. Many of the ECS awards and fellowships were funded by major gifts from the estates of scientific luminaries including Vittorio de Nora, Herbert H. Dow, Heinz Gerischer, Carl Hering, Samuel Rubin, Herbert Uhlig, Edward Weston, and Jerry Woodall. As well, a number of ECS Presidents have made major gifts to the Publications Endowment including: James Amick, Ralph Brodd, Larry Faulkner, Robert Frankenthal, Charles Tobias’ estate, and Wayne Worrell.

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We have built a sizeable endowment to support the awards program as well as our education and publication activities, but we have a greater need now than ever. We want to keep our prices low because cost is an obstacle for dissemination of technical content and ultimately hinders the advancement of our science. We anticipate some financial challenges next year because we have recently launched a series of costly publications initiatives and eliminated the journals page charges. These initiatives will create significant opportunities for our authors, but we anticipate they will put a major strain on our budget and for the first time ever we will need subsidies from our Publications Endowment to meet expenses. We are simultaneously feeling pressure on our Education Endowment to provide more funding for fellowships and student travel grants.

We started building the ECS Publications Endowment ten years ago as part of our Centennial Campaign at a time when the scientific community began discussing the possibility of free or open technical content on the Web. The leadership of ECS felt it was important to plan for open access of our technical content because the cost for knowledge slows or deters the advancement of science. It is still our goal and we continue our efforts to find the financial resources to create open access to the ECS Digital Library. As far as the plans for our Education Endowment, the programs are constantly expanding because of the need to fund student fellowships, awarded memberships, travel grants, chapters, and career services. Thanks to Dr. Hancock and many of you, we have established and grown these endowments, but to reach our goals we could use a few more gift horses. Go to www.electrochem.org and click *Support Our Future* for information on how you can donate to our education and publications programs.

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ECS Executive Director