



## Criminalistics Section – 2004

---

### **B43 Remembering Walter C. McCrone - Scientist, Educator, Microscopist**

*John A. Reffner, PhD\*, SensIR Technologies, 97 Ocean Drive East, Danbury, CT*

Walter C. McCrone, scientist, mentor, leader, and friend - a very special person. On first meeting Dr. McCrone in June of 1958, he greeted this author saying, "You're the one who signed up for all three courses this summer; I really wanted to meet you." The spark in his eye, the smile on his face, and the tone of his voice conveyed his honesty and sincerity. Imagine this young man's feelings – Dr. McCrone wanted to meet him. In the forty-four years since, Dr. McCrone has inspired thousands of students with the same sincere interest in their learning microscopy combined with his special talent to teach.

Dr. McCrone was blessed with qualities that set him apart. If Walter were an entertainer, then he would be called a superstar. He was elevated because he had a special way of connecting with people. Walter's feelings for all people were broadcast by his words, his actions, and his strength. His special insights were scientific, artistic, and humanistic. His loyalty to Cornell University is legendary. He was a disciple of Professor Emile Chamot and an evangelist for chemical microscopy. Walter inspired many young people to excel by revealing talents concealed by their youth and suppressed by feelings of inadequacy. His praise and counsel were valued by all. He will always be a superstar.

Dr. McCrone was a scientist who championed light microscopy. He strongly believed that observation is the primary tenant of the scientific method and the light microscope was the fundamental tool of science. Many read into his writings a reluctance to accept advances in instrumental analysis; this is erroneous. Dr. McCrone's unique approach to the integration of light microscopy with other analytical instrumental methods has special importance to the forensic scientist. His message was always to begin a scientific investigation with observation and use microscopy as the initial step. Often, his simple observations and disciplined thinking led to solving major problems. Ranking the microscope as the first tool of scientific investigation does not diminish contributions by other technologies. Conversely, new technologies neither eliminate microscopy nor displace its primary position.

Dr. McCrone was dedicated to scientific principles, was driven by his convictions, and was a tireless worker. Now the baton has passed; it must be grasped and the race continued. Dr. McCrone's challenge is to keep the fundamentals of microscopy ranked number one.

Society was truly blessed by his life.

#### **Walter McCrone, Tribute, Microscopy**