



ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Ronald Caple '60

Duluth, Minnesota | Professor Emeritus of Chemistry, University of Minnesota-Duluth

PHOTOGRAPHED AT LAKE SUPERIOR
BY BRETT GROEHLER, UMD

Ronald Caple was profoundly affected when one of his first students at University of Minnesota-Duluth (UMD) was killed in action during the Vietnam War. It shook up his view of the world and inspired him to dedicate his career to promoting human understanding and preventing future conflicts.

Collaborating early and often with scientists in Russia, China, Cuba, and Vietnam, Caple made concerted efforts to create peace through scientific cooperation. He essentially set up a one-man exchange program with Russia, visiting the country nineteen times to conduct research, lecture, and establish con-

“The commencement speaker at my graduation talked about how important it is for Oles to get out in the world and promote understanding. Bingo! He’s describing this Ole right on the head. I developed this awareness of other cultures and what’s going on in the world while at St. Olaf.”

tacts. Independently, he kept the channels of communication, exchange and collaboration open with Soviet chemists during the Cold War.

A specialist in synthetic organic chemistry, Caple has been much lauded for his research, teaching, and dedication to pharmacy students at the University of Minnesota. He has published nearly 100 articles and the book *Organic Synthesis: The Science Behind the Art*. He also participated actively in the Council on Undergraduate Research for many years, including serving as chairperson.

To promote international cooperation another way, Caple helped establish a “sister city” connection between Duluth and Petrozavodsk, Russia, and an informal connection with Pinar del Rio, Cuba. Both relationships developed fertile exchanges of ideas and visitors. In 2005, Caple earned the U.S. Civilian Research and Development Fund award for his efforts to foster international cooperation in science, joining alumni recipients Al Gore

and George Soros. Caple also earned the Science Competition Prize from the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1978, several honorary degrees from prestigious Russian universities and is Doctor Honoris Causa of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

In 1965, as a newly minted Ph.D. and professor, Caple took on the unwanted position of advising pre-pharmacy majors at UMD. Though he has been retired for four years, he still mentors these students as a volunteer. For these efforts — which has resulted in Caple advising 10 percent of the practicing pharmacists in Minnesota — he received the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy Award, the first time this honor was given to someone outside the college and off the Twin Cities campus. Caple also received several awards for undergraduate teaching.

Caple recently created the Ronnie Lindstrom International Scholarship Fund to honor his former student who died in Vietnam. He aims to help youth from developing nations pursue their undergraduate degrees at UMD, hoping that they use their new skills and education to benefit their native countries while also fostering international understanding. 🍷