In honor of the late Moses Passer, Ph.D. ’48 and former American Chemical Society director of education, his widow, Dorothy Passer, has endowed the Moses Passer Lecture Series in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology.

Born in Poland on January 30, 1917, Moses Passer was brought to the United States by his parents as a child and grew up in Rochester, New York. He attended the University of Rochester, from which he graduated in 1945 with a B.S. in chemistry, and Cornell University, which in 1948 granted him a Ph.D. in organic chemistry (under the guidance of A.T. Blomquist, working on organic reaction mechanisms). From 1952 to 1953, he conducted postdoctoral research at the University of Illinois (with C.S. Marvel in polymer chemistry).

Moses Passer had two professional careers. The first career, 1948–64, was at the University of Minnesota, Duluth (UMD), as assistant professor, associate professor (1954), and professor of chemistry (1960). During his last 10 years at UMD, he also directed the Duluth section of the Minnesota Peat Research Project. In 1964, Passer accepted an appointment as educational secretary of the American Chemical Society and, the following year, initiated the ACS Short Courses program at the 1965 spring national meeting. The short courses captured the imagination of the ACS community and were an instant success.

When Passer joined the ACS staff in 1964, educational activities consisted of career services, student affiliates, and the Committee on Professional Training. By 1987, ACS educational activities encompassed a broad spectrum of novel and effective programs designed to make chemistry accessible to every audience. These ranged from pre–high school science projects for parents and children, through a rich variety of activities at the high school, college, and university levels, to a wide array of in-person and media lifelong continuing education offerings for practicing professionals in the chemical sciences. Indeed, the continuing education programs became models for scientific societies both in this country and abroad. The rapid growth of the ACS education sector during Passer’s tenure is illustrated by the fact that more than 90 percent of the educational activities available at his retirement were developed under his leadership, and the education budget grew five times as fast as the ACS overall.

In 1993, at a national meeting of the American Chemical Society, Moses Passer was honored with a symposium in his name, co-sponsored by the ACS Division of Chemical Education and the Society Committee on Education. This symposium was in recognition of Passer’s contributions to science and chemical education during the more than two decades he served on the ACS staff.

Also in 1993, the ACS Division of Chemical Education announced the Passer Education Fund. This fund was established by Moses and Dorothy Passer to help improve the teaching of the chemical sciences by providing grants to chemistry and chemical technology teachers at undergraduate institutions. The grants support participation in continuing education courses in subject matter directly related to teaching.

Moses Passer received the District of Columbia Institute of Chemists Honor Scroll in 1977. He was a member of the Council of Engineering and Scientific Society Executives, Sigma Xi, and the Cosmos Club. He was also a fellow of the American Institute of Chemists and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Passer was the author or co-author of papers in Engineering Education, Industrial and Engineering Chemistry, Journal of Chemical Education, Journal of Polymer Science, and Journal of the American Chemical Society. Moses Passer died at his home in Washington on January 10, 1999.