



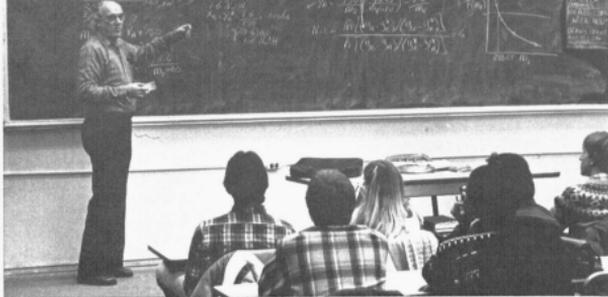
MARC de CHAZAL: OPEN DOOR, OPEN MIND

By Terry Skinner

Like the balanced chemical equations he teaches, Marc de Chazal seeks a life of balance for himself — a balance among intellect, empathy and solitude. At times his uncompromising principles make him unpopular. “I place more importance on doing what I think is right and saying what I think is right rather than getting along,” says the 59-year-old chemical engineering professor. This attitude, one that de Chazal calls more European than American, has allowed him to achieve a satisfying balance between the sciences and humanities. As



The door to Marc de Chazal's office is always open to students needing to talk about academic or personal problems. "In theory I'm not an adviser, but in practice I probably advise 80 percent of the students." In the classroom his British accent takes students through the principles of chemical engineering. A gourmet cook, de Chazal makes bread each Saturday for the week ahead.



a teacher and scientist, he uses an analytical mind to solve problems of chemistry. As a humanist, he lends a sympathetic ear to students' personal problems, befriends prison inmates and is dedicated to his family. He balances his public vs. private life with daily doses of solitude.

Sometimes called a "philosopher of science," de Chazal was reared on Mauritius, a British island off the east coast of Africa. The English governess who lived at his family's plantation-like home based his education on the disciplined European system. When he went to college at Louisiana State University, he was part of the GI rush. "They [GIs] went for it, and they studied hard," he says. "But when I started teaching [at Mizzou in 1953], the students had grown up with their fathers at war and they were like brats. I overcompensated and pushed them."

Bill Drummond, BS ChE '56, JD '61, one of de Chazal's first students at Mizzou, says, "Marc had a more formal approach to teaching than American teachers. But by the middle of the semester he had made personal friends with almost everyone in the class.

"WE WOULD GO TO HIS HOUSE for barbecues and you could tell he really enjoyed being around the students," the Phoenix patent lawyer continues. "He is one of the two or three most dedicated teachers I have ever come across."

Now de Chazal also uses humor in teaching. "It helps relax the student and the teacher, but it's not a substitute for the meat of the course."

This semester de Chazal is teaching Principles of Chemical Engineering, a course where such principles as fluid flow, heat transfer and chemical

reactions are taught. When Scotty DeClue, a junior chemical engineering major, has trouble with one of these principles, he finds his professor's door — and mind — open. "Rather than tell you the answers, he'll ask you questions and let you work it out yourself," DeClue says. "Even though he's been teaching here a long time and must have heard the same questions over and over again, he still welcomes you into his office."

TODAY'S STUDENTS are more conservative and not as hard-working as they used to be, says de Chazal. "But the biggest difference in engineering is the influx of women," the self-proclaimed feminist says. "Engineering used to be a male occupation. Now 15 to 20 percent of the junior class are women and the freshmen class is 50 percent women.

"I'm a great believer in women," he says seriously. "The largest single underprivileged group in this country is women."

He ruffled some faculty members by heading an American Association of University Professors' drive for equal pay for women. Not running a popularity contest as president of the Graduate Faculty Senate, de Chazal proposed deans be reviewed every five years and that no administrator be granted tenure. "He likes to shake things up," says Jim Pastoret, associate professor of forestry and a de Chazal neighbor. "He's not a politician and he doesn't dance around. He hits head on."

"Because of my solitary nature I don't have a deep need to be liked by everyone," says de Chazal. "If I had to choose between a principle and a friend, I would choose the first."

De Chazal's special field is solvent extraction, a process by which pure chemicals are obtained, much like Vitamin A is extracted from cod liver oil. One of its greatest uses is the separation of plutonium and uranium from fission products in a nuclear reactor so they may be reused. De Chazal believes nuclear energy "is essential and a desirable alternative to coal and certainly to OPEC oil." He was the chairman of the committee that began the nuclear engineering program at Mizzou and bemoans nuclear energy's most serious problem: bad press. "This is the fault of the nuclear energy program itself," he says. "They've stressed safety in the most scary terms, such as maximum credible accident. This triggers fright."

Energy conscious de Chazal has not driven his car

to school in 20 years (granted — he only lives a few blocks from Campus). He uses only one set of lights and no heat in his office. And to his wife's dismay, he keeps the home thermostat set at 65 °F during the day and 55 at night. "I keep it colder than she likes, but she's getting used to it," he says of his wife, Eva. "I'm trying to get her used to the idea of more layers of clothes.

"My family is pretty much paramount to me," says the father of two college-age daughters. But dependency is not what makes the family close-knit. "Eva and I don't do a lot of things together," he says. "It's more like a mutual support for our parallel play. We respect each other's feelings for what we want to do. My family is more like a support group."

His wife's interest in prison education programs, however, rubbed off on de Chazal six years ago. Together, they helped a Moberly inmate attend writing workshops and publish several short stories. And now, in typical de Chazal fashion, he is president of the Mid-Missouri Association of Volunteers in Corrections. Journalism Professor Paul Fisher, one of Mizzou's faculty and staff members who travels with de Chazal to the prison in Jefferson City every Saturday night, says, "Marc brings deep thinking to the prisoners, something they're not exposed to. He becomes very important to them. He's a light from the outside."

"It's difficult not to get involved once you get started," de Chazal says. "Inmates are usually treated so brutally that when someone is kind they are so grateful that you get sucked in. But I don't expect to turn around a life, that's too romantic to say. They have to make the change in themselves. What we do most is keep them going."

While de Chazal's visits may keep the prisoners going, solitude keeps him going.

"I **NEED SOLITUDE** part of the time," says the professor who once dreamed of being a ranger in the tropical forest. "I try to spend an hour or more a day contemplating life, whether it's walking to work or while cooking. [He is a gourmet cook who cooks all weekend meals and often during the week.] I cannot be surrounded by people all day."

He lives by his principles. "Of all the virtues, courage is the most important," goes de Chazal's favorite quote, "because without it you cannot consistently exercise all others." □