

SYNTHESIS



Reinhard W. Hoffmann

Dear Reader,

This issue of **SYNTHESIS** honours **Professor Dr. Reinhard W. Hoffmann** on the occasion of his 75th birthday on July 18th 2008. Reinhard W. Hoffmann was born in 1933 in Würzburg. He studied chemistry at the Universität Bonn and received his Dr. rer. nat. in 1958 under the direction of Prof. B. Helferich. He spent two years as a postdoctoral fellow at The Pennsylvania State University with Prof. G. W. Brindley and then moved to the Universität Heidelberg for another postdoctoral year with Prof. G. Wittig. In 1964 he obtained his Habilitation and in 1967 he moved as lecturer to the Technische Hochschule Darmstadt, and in 1970 to a position as Professor of Organic Chemistry at the Universität Marburg. Since 2001, R. W. Hoffmann is Professor Emeritus at Marburg.

In the first phase of his scientific career, R. W. Hoffmann focused on reactive intermediates (arynes, diradicals, nucleophilic carbenes and 1,3-dipoles). Through-space π -interactions were another research topic of this period. With studies of 2,3-sigmatropic rearrangements, his research interests then shifted towards synthetic methodology with emphasis on stereoselectivity. He is a pioneer, leading figure and a master in stereocontrolled allylboration. Numerous efficient total syntheses of macrolides and other polyketides from his lab demonstrated the synthetic capability of his methodology. It was within that period that he realized and stressed the importance of 1,3-allylic strain in acyclic stereocontrol. From the Marburg lab originated significant contributions to the chemistry of α -heterosubstituted organolithium and organomagnesium reagents. Inspired by the conformational bias of polyketides, Hoffmann started a fruitful

research project on the conformation design of flexible molecules with defined shape.

The successful development of the Marburg chemistry department over the last 30 years is in great part the result of his efforts. His high scientific standards, his convincing lectures and his advice are all guidelines for his colleagues.

From a former co-worker's point of view, Reinhard Hoffmann was a brilliant, motivating teacher finding always the perfect balance between promoting and demanding. His overview of all disciplines in chemistry is unique, and thanks to his extraordinary educational skills, some of this profound knowledge was successfully imparted to his students in excellent group seminars. We learned a great deal about chemistry and – in the course of our theses – the cost-conscious use of resources (which turned out to be a perfect preparation for a job in the chemical industry!). Those of us who were applying for postdoctoral positions always benefited from his broad network which, owing to his reputation in the worldwide scientific community, is truly international.

For me (K.D.) his phenomenal memory is very impressive. His huge loose-leaf collection, containing numerous handwritten notes from his literature studies and conferences attendances, is legendary. In the middle of many discussions, Reinhard would get up, go to his collection, and with a single attempt pull out exactly what you were looking for!

Aside from chemistry, his passion is hiking, which is why his group once a year left for a hiking tour to the Vosges in France. Being together for one week in the middle of nowhere in a small hut, hiking, cooking together, whilst discussing chemistry (less) and the tasting of red wine (more), always proved very beneficial to the group's team spirit. We all enjoyed these events to such an extent that, even after 2001 when Reinhard was named Professor Emeritus, the tradition is still perpetuated. To our great pleasure, even though he is entering the second half-time of his life, while also carrying out his duties as a multiple grandfather, he attends our annual alumni meetings.

We are all very much looking forward to having many more hiking tours together with Reinhard Hoffmann!

Ulrich Koert (Marburg) and Klaus Ditrich (Ludwigshafen)
June, 2008

On behalf of all **SYNTHESIS** editors and the publishing house, we wish you a heartfelt Happy Birthday!

Erick M. Carreira and Dieter Enders