

CONRAD HANS EUGSTER

IN MEMORIAM

A pioneer and highly respected authority on carotenoid chemistry, Professor em. Conrad H. Eugster died on 21 August 2012 in Wallisellen, Switzerland, at the age of 91.

We have lost a famous colleague, a dear friend and a distinguished member of The International Carotenoid Society.

Conrad Hans Eugster was born 17th July 1921 in Landquart, Switzerland. He obtained his doctorate at the University of Zurich in 1953 under the guidance of the Nobel Prize winner Paul Karrer, became Associate Professor in 1963 and full Professor in organic chemistry in 1969 at the Institute of Organic Chemistry. He retired officially in 1988, but continued to maintain his interest in the carotenoid field.

Eugster had a broad interest in natural product chemistry, besides carotenoids, was also involved in structure elucidation and total syntheses of other terpenoids, alkaloids, fungal constituents such as muscarine, quinones, terpenoids, heterocyclic systems including furans, the synthesis of cyclohexylsulfonic acids and the mechanism of the Favorski rearrangement.

His carotenoid research falls into two periods: Total synthesis in the early 1950s and structure, stereochemistry, reactions and syntheses from 1970 onwards. He performed the first total synthesis of beta-carotene in 1950 together with Karrer and in 1953, published a book on Total Syntheses of Carotenoids. He contributed much to the carotenoid research literature during the second period. Eugster was the perfect link between the Karrer period and the modern era of carotenoid chemistry including structure elucidation and syntheses, especially his contributions to the stereochemistry and reactivity of carotenoid epoxides.

Eugster had in total 331 publications, had 54 co-authors from 1969-1988 and was cited by 234 authors.

In Highlights of Chemistry for Helv.Chim.Acta he treated the development in carotenoid chemistry 1922-1991.

Conrad Eugster cultivated and loved roses, both for their beauty and their chemistry cfr. Angew. Chem. Int.Ed. 1991.

I had regular correspondance with Conrad Eugster since 1970, we met first time in 1975 and had a fruitful collaboration since then, involving structure elucidation, stereochemistry, publications, exchange of samples, editing matters etc. He served as opponet for a doctor thesis and supplied a postdoctoral worker to our group. We co-published on many occasions. In 1990 he was elected a member of The Royal Norwegian Society of Science and Letters in recognition of the Swiss-Norwegian collaboration.

During the 8th International Carotenoid Symposium in Boston in 1987, it was arranged a special Eugster Symposium in his honour, and I had the pleasure of giving an plenary lecture.

In an interview prior to this event I asked him which carotenoid project that he had worked with was the most difficult, most challenging and most rewarding.

In his reply ,he referred to the total synthesis of beta-carotene in 1948-50, the determiation of the chirality of the epsilon-end group, and the stereochemistry and reactivity of carotenoid epoxides,

It was for many of us an honour, a pleasure and an inspiration to know Conrad Eugster.

Our sympathy goes to his family

Synnøve Liaaen-Jensen