

**TO PROFESSOR HENK VAN DER PLAS
ON HIS 70TH BIRTHDAY**

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On May 4, 1999, Professor Henk van der Plas celebrates his 70th birthday. The world renowned organic chemist is an authority on the chemistry of heterocyclic compounds and a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Professor van der Plas was born in the Netherlands and studied at the University of Amsterdam. After defending his Ph.D. dissertation, he spent two years at Louisville University (USA), where he became familiar with nuclear magnetic resonance, which had just emerged as a method of organic chemistry. After returning to the Netherlands, he avidly used this method to study the mechanism of amination of azaheterocycles and the transformations of heterocyclic rings. Professor van der Plas received worldwide recognition for his pioneering work on the detection of sigma-adducts of azines in liquid ammonia and their oxidation by potassium permanganate (a modern version of the Chichibabin reaction), on the conceptualization of the ANRORC mechanism, and on the paths of nucleophilic substitution. These studies are of fundamental importance for organic chemistry. His scientific career was very successful. He rather quickly achieved the rank of professor (1965-1971) and then head of the organic chemistry laboratory (1971-1991). Professor Henk van der Plas was twice elected rector-dean of Wageningen Agricultural University (1977-1981 and 1992-1994).

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The study of transformations of isotopically labelled heterocyclic rings brought broad recognition and fame to Henk van der Plas. His two-volume monograph *Ring Transformations of Heterocycles* (Academic Press, 1973) immediately became a standard reference for chemists working with heterocycles. Professor van der Plas became in 1980 the first recipient of the award for the best research from the International Society of Heterocyclic Chemistry for a series of studies on reaction mechanisms. His broad scientific vision made him one of the first heterocyclic chemists to recognize the importance of biotechnology and the promise of using biocatalysts in organic synthesis. He demonstrated their effectiveness through the oxidation of azaheterocycles on immobilized enzymes.

Professor Henk van der Plas is known as a brilliant lecturer and excellent organizer of science and international cooperation. He has successfully chaired the Royal Chemical Society of the Netherlands (1974-1977) and the Federation of European Chemical Societies (1976-1981). He was the president of the Chemistry Committee of the Netherlands Academy of Science and president of the Association of Holland Universities for international scientific cooperation (1983-1987). He was also president of the International Society of Heterocyclic Chemistry (1983-1989). He collaborated widely with chemists from Poland, Hungary, Russia, Latvia, Belgium, England, France, the United States, and other countries. He gave many lectures in Moscow, Ekaterinburg, Riga, Tashkent, Novosibirsk, Omsk, and other scientific centers. He has strong scientific ties to chemists in Ekaterinburg, as witnessed by the series of joint articles and reviews in *Tetrahedron*, *Advances in Heterocyclic Chemistry*, and the monograph *Nucleophilic Aromatic Substitution of Hydrogen* (Academic Press, 1994). His close collaboration with Ural chemists is evident from the fact that in 1994 he was elected an honorary member of the Ural Division of the Russian Academy of Science.

As always, Professor van der Plas is cheerful, energetic, and enthusiastic about scientific discussions. "Chemistry is unpredictable" was the title of an article that recently appeared in *Poisk*, in which one of the predictions made by Henk van der Plas in his brilliant lecture at an international conference on organic chemistry in Ekaterinburg was cited. It seems to us that these words express not only the passion of this famous scientist for chemistry but also the hope for new discoveries.

The Editorial Board of Chemistry of Heterocyclic Compounds congratulates Professor Henk van der Plas on his jubilee and wishes him good health and future success.