

Preface

Elastomers are a group of unique polymeric materials; their uniqueness and rubbery elasticity, which is thermodynamically based on the entropic factor, originates from the extremely salient nature of polymers. Therefore, elastomers have attracted the interest of many scientists, even before the advent of macromolecular theory (see, for example, Mandelkern, L. *Rubber Chem Technol* 1993, 66, G61–G75).

The International Seminar on Elastomers was first held in Akron, Ohio in 1977 as the *US–Japan Seminar on Elastomers*, and developed into a truly international meeting, as shown in the table below. On each seminar, a more or less detailed account of each seminar can be found in this journal (*J Appl Polym Sci* 2000, 78, 1459–1460, and *J Appl Polym Sci* 2003, 87, 1). It is noted that the 7th Seminar, held in Bangkok, strongly promoted the research activities on rubbers in Thailand, and the following two seminars had quite a number of Thai scientists as contributors. This is understandable when we consider that Thailand is now

the top producer of natural rubber. It also still maintains the most important position in the utilization of elastomers, especially in heavy-duty uses such as aircraft tires.

The most recent seminar, the 9th International Seminar on Elastomers, was held in Kyoto, Japan, on April 2–4, 2003. There, four Plenary Lectures, 42 oral, and 30 poster presentations were communicated and actively discussed by scientists from nine countries (Brazil, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, and the USA). From these, the following papers have been selected either as representative of various aspects of elastomers or on the basis of the scientific quality of the results.

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The International Seminars on Elastomers

No.	Location	Year	Organizers
1	Akron, Ohio, USA	1977	M. Morton, N. Yamazaki
2	Ito, Japan	1985	J. Furukawa, N. Yamazaki
3	Akron, Ohio, USA	1988	J. L. White, K. Murakami
4	Kurume, Japan	1990	K. Murakami, J. L. White
5	Akron, Ohio, USA	1993	J. L. White, T. Inoue
6	Kyongju, South Korea	1996	C. S. Ha, J. K. Kim, P. K. Paik
7	Bangkok, Thailand	1998	K. Suchiva, J. L. White
8	Le Mans, France	2001	J. L. Leblanc
9	Kyoto, Japan	2003	S. Kohjiya