

Editorial

2006 ACS Award Issue  
“For Creative Work in Fluorine Chemistry” Kenji Uneyama



Each year the Journal of Fluorine Chemistry publishes a special issue to honor the annual recipient of the American Chemical Society Award for Creative Work in Fluorine Chemistry. In this issue, we are honoring the creative spirit of the 2007 award winner, Professor Kenji Uneyama and the broad and significant contributions he has made to the field of synthetic organofluorine chemistry.

Many of the papers included in this special issue were submitted by colleagues who participated in the Award Symposium held at the 233rd ACS National Meeting, March 25–29, 2007, in Chicago, IL, as invited lecturers. However, such was the overwhelming response to this fitting recognition of Prof. Uneyama's lifelong contributions to the field of organofluorine chemistry, that a record-setting number of his friends and colleagues have chosen to contribute papers to the special Uneyama Issue of the Journal of Fluorine Chemistry. The issue is comprised of 36 papers in all, and they encompass the broad field of fluorine chemistry. Most, of course, involve

one aspect or another of the field of synthetic organofluorine chemistry, but there are also contributions related to CFC alternatives, liquid crystals, medicinal chemistry and polymer chemistry. The centerpiece of the issue is a brief, but thorough review by Professor Uneyama entitled “Fluoride ion-catalyzed Desilylative-Defluorination for Synthetic Organic Chemistry,” a field to which he has contributed greatly.

Kenji Uneyama received his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at Osaka City University, where, in 1969, he obtained his Ph.D. working under the supervision of Professor Sigeru Oae, with whom he collaborated in studying a physical organic subject on 3d-orbital resonance of divalent sulfides. In that same year, he started lecturing at Okayama University, in the south of Japan's main island of Honshu, where until his retirement this year he directed a large and dynamic research group. Until well after his promotion to full professor in 1984, Kenji's research interests were mainly in the areas of organic electrochemistry and natural product synthesis. There is no doubt that the unique contributions that he has been able to make to the field of organofluorine chemistry were, to a significant extent, a direct result of his earlier diverse experiences outside the field.

In the 1980s Kenji recognized the growing interest in fluorine chemistry, particularly in Japan, and he came to the conclusion that this was a field within which he could make use of his ideas and experience to make a contribution. As has been said, “The rest is history!” Having an almost immediate impact on the field, Kenji became a favorite speaker at international fluorine conferences—of course because of his great science, but also because of Kenji's warm, outgoing personality and his almost unique ability to communicate. As a result, Kenji has become a mainstay at the International Conferences in Fluorine Chemistry, the European Symposia on Fluorine Chemistry, and the Winter Fluorine Conferences, as well as just about every important conference related to Fluorine Chemistry held in the last 15 years. Virtually all of his more than 110 papers published since 1988 have related to the field of synthetic organofluorine chemistry.

It can be safely said that over the last 10 years, Professor Kenji Uneyama has emerged as the most diversely creative and productive synthetic organofluorine chemist in the world. An

example of perhaps Kenji's most outstanding recent work is his development of a novel magnesium-promoted carbon-fluorine bond activation process, where for the first time it was demonstrated that carbon-fluorine activation can be a useful process in synthesis. He believes that this method of using magnesium for carbon-fluorine activation could eventually become useful within some industrial applications.

Before receiving this year's ACS Award for Creative Work in Fluorine Chemistry, Kenji had already received much national and international recognition for his career accomplishments, including the prestigious award of the Society of Synthetic Organic Chemistry, in Japan in 1997.

Unfortunately for the fluorine community, under the rules of employment prevailing at Okayama University, Kenji

has just attained the mandatory age of retirement, although it appears unlikely that this will slow him down for a while. Thus, we expect and hope to see him, his wife Motoko, and his daughter Ayumi at future fluorine meetings throughout the world, as he continues to contribute in his inimitable way to the field of fluorine chemistry for many years to come.

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