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Ann-Christine Albertsson; Otto Vogl

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BENGT RÅNBY HONORED

With this Symposium, "Macromolecular Architecture: Nature as a Model of Molecular design of the Polymeric Materials of Tomorrow," we are honoring Professor Bengt Rånby on his 75th birthday.

Bengt Rånby was born in Niemisel, Råneå, Sweden on April 5, 1920. He was raised and educated in Sweden, receiving his baccalaureate in Lund in 1938. Bengt Rånby then studied at the world-famous University of Uppsala, Sweden (Linné's alma mater), receiving the B.Sc. in 1940, the M.S. in 1945, and the Ph.D. with the illustrious Professor and Nobel Laureate The(odor) Svedberg in 1952. Rånby's thesis was concerned with the "Fine Structure and Reactions of native Cellulose." Shortly after receiving his Ph.D., he was appointed "Docent" and University Lecturer in Physical Chemistry, an important recognition in Sweden at that time, and was in Uppsala from 1952–1955. While Bengt was still a member of the teaching staff of Uppsala University, he decided to go abroad and spent one year in the United States in New York City at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn where he worked as a du Pont Fellow on synthetic polymers with Professor Herman F. Mark (1952–1953).

After his return to Sweden, Bengt Rånby completed his appointment in Uppsala and decided he needed more experience in the New World. He took employment at the American Viscose Corporation in Marcus Hook, PA. After 3 years he was invited to consider a position as Research Professor of Pulp and Paper Technology at the State University of New York and as Director of the Empire State Paper Research Institute, in Syracuse, NY, which he accepted. During this period of his career he spent 6 years in the United States.

In 1961 Bengt Rånby received a call from the Royal Institute of Technology to consider a position as Professor of Polymer Technology, a Chair which was specially created for him in the field of his expertise. Rånby accepted this position. This was the first professorship in the polymer field in the Nordic countries. He held this Professorship for 25 years until his retirement in 1986. During this period Bengt Rånby was also the Dean of the School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering for 4 years. During his time as chairman, the Department of Polymer Technology grew to be one of the most active departments in the Royal Institute of Technology with a faculty of four professors, four University lecturers ("docents"), and 40 graduate students. As Professor Emeritus, Rånby now continues his work with a small group of research fellows.

Rånby had a tremendous impact on polymer science worldwide and especially

on polymer science in Scandinavia. Although a Nobel prize was awarded to Svedberg for his research on "disperse systems" and the development of the ultracentrifuge (the prize was for physical chemistry, polymer science was then not an established and separately recognized discipline), it was left to his student Rånby to establish the Royal Institute of Technology and the Department of Polymer Technology as an institution of higher learning in polymer science and technology that is among the elite in this field in the world.

Rånby achieved this leading position because of his personal scientific competence, his leadership in science, and his exceptional personality. He has traveled, lectured, and consulted extensively worldwide on polymer science, on catalysis, on photochemistry, on radical reactions, and on organic chemistry. In his photochemical work he has identified the intermediate radicals and the mechanisms in degradation and modification of polymers, and also invented promising methods for crosslinking and surface modifications of fibers and films, using photoinitiation with UV light.

Over the years Bengt Rånby was invited to teach in many scientific academic institutions. He has been a Visiting Professor of Polymer Science at a number of universities—at the North Carolina State University (1968), at the Universities of Kyoto and Hokkaido in Japan (1973), at the University of Science and Technology in Hefei, Anhui, in China (since 1987), at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst (1976) and at the Midland Macromolecular Institute in Michigan (1978) in the United States.

Many honors have been bestowed on Bengt Rånby: Honorary doctoral degrees from the University of Helsinki, Finland, the University of Wraclav, Poland, and, most recently, the Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, New York (1995). Rånby has received the Anselme Payen Award Cellulose Award from the American Chemical Society (1987), the Herman F. Mark Medal of the Institute of Science and Technology of Vienna, Austria (1992), the Great Prize of the Royal Institute of Technology in 1991, and the Award for Distinguished Service in Polymer Science from the Society of Polymer Science, Japan, in 1995.

Bengt Rånby is a Member of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences, Uppsala; the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, Stockholm; and the Finnish Academy of Sciences. Since 1985, Professor Rånby has been a Member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, and he is a member of its Executive Board.

Rånby's research reaches many fields, and he has contributed in all the areas that he studied, fundamentally and with great success.

Rånby started his research as a cellulose chemist with a dissertation on the morphology, structure, and reactions of native cellulose, and has continued research on new methods for cellulose fiber modification. His main effort was devoted to synthetic polymers, e.g., ESR studies of free radical polymerization and polymer degradation, photochemical reactions of polymers including new methods of photocrosslinking and surface modification by photografting, which are now being developed as industrial processes. Rånby's work in cellulose, starch, and synthetic polymer chemistry used several techniques including electron microscopy and x-ray diffraction electron spin.

These examples show Rånby as a scientist, teacher, lecturer, and scientific politician of global stature. He is an exceptional personality, well known for his keen wit, subtle sense of humor, and gentle manner. Over the years he was and still

is in great demand as a lecturer on subjects ranging from photochemistry to polymer chemistry to general philosophy.

Bengt Rånby has been married to Aina Ingeborg Charlotta Hultcrantz since 1945; they have 3 children, Hans, Mats, and Brigit.

It is for us a great pleasure and honor to wish you, Bengt, continued success in science, and for you and your wife, Aina, much happiness and continued good health in your personal life. *Ad Multos Annos*!

April 1995

Ann-Christine Albertsson
Otto Vogl