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DR. MAURITS DEKKER: AN APPRECIATION ON THE OCCASION OF HIS NINETIETH BIRTHDAY

In the late 1930s, many intellectuals left Europe in view of the cruel and violent anti-Semitic policy of the Nazis. Young or old, rich or poor, the building of a new life was a very hard and difficult job. Even those who came with good contacts—family, business, professional—faced the problem of assimilation: language, habits, and daily routine. Many struggled for years. A few settled rapidly and made a career which they probably never would have made in Europe. They were solid, ambitious people who achieved lasting, ever-growing success. One of these smart and hard-working persons was Maurits Dekker.

He came to this country as a representative of a prosperous and well-known Dutch publishing house, Elsevier Publishing. Publishing, at that time, was a crowded art: medicine, science, art, music, and fiction. All categories were well represented, and the competition was fierce. "Mau," as he is called by all of us, had his own ideas and, with his colleague, Dr. Eric Proskauer, started to put them into action. He had, for this work, the financial backing of his Dutch company and of several American friends. When Eric and I approached Mau with the idea of starting an organized literature on high polymers, he was immediately interested and very cooperative. Particularly, he agreed on these important steps:

- (1) to publish immediately the *Collected Papers of W. H. Carothers*, which would be the first comprehensive book on high polymers, particularly nylon and neoprene, and
- (2) to translate, improve, and adapt German books on high polymers, from fundamental content to a series of practical applications.

Because of Mau's university education in chemistry and microbiology, he quickly understood precisely what was needed for such a transfer of educational and reference literature: A textbook entitled *Introduction to Polymer*

Chemistry and another *Physical Chemistry of High Polymers*. The first would be devoted essentially to polymeric *materials*, and the second to the laws which govern their *behavior*.

Whenever Proskauer and I had some concrete ideas about potential projects, we went to Mau for advice and help because, after all, he had to develop the resources for every concrete action in the field. This he did with never-failing enthusiasm and success. Eric and I knew what new shores we should visit for a promising venture, and Mau saw to it that we got to them. For many critical years he kept our little shaky boat afloat through squalls and storms.

A natural outgrowth of these ventures was the formation of Interscience Publishers, Inc., New York, with Mau as President and Eric Proskauer as Vice President. His most important achievement in those days was the planning and publication of the *Encyclopedia of Chemical Technology*, the famous "Kirk-Othmer" encyclopedia. It is a classic work, having great educational impact, and has just now appeared in its third edition.

After John Wiley & Sons joined with Interscience in 1961, Mau stayed with the merged company until 1965. In 1966, he joined Marcel Dekker, Inc., a company started by his son Marcel in 1963. Mau used his considerable experience in acquisitions to further augment the sound publications base Marcel had already begun. Today, Marcel Dekker, Inc. is one of the few remaining privately owned and operated scientific publishers in the United States. When one considers that Maurits Dekker was directly responsible for, or significantly instrumental in, the founding of three publishing firms, one cannot help but marvel at his accomplishments.

Mau has now reached 90 years of "ageless" life. He is full of ideas for new ventures, always a true and dependable friend, and for all of us a model of a distinguished leader in science, business, and all human affairs. We admire him fondly and wish him even more years of a healthy, happy, and rewarding life.

In warm friendship—yours always

Herman Mark