

Preface



Professor Alberto Ceccon, F.C.S.

Alberto Ceccon, like so many organometallic chemists, was originally trained as an organic chemist. He graduated in Chemistry in 1958 at the Organic Chemistry Department of the University of Padova with a thesis entitled ‘Structural effects in the nucleophilic substitution at the sulfur atom’ as a student of Prof. A. Iliceto and Prof. Antonio Fava. In 1960–61 he moved to the Department of Inorganic Chemistry as a post-doctoral fellow of the Italian Council of Research where good fortune exposed him to the potential role of metals in organic chemistry. He returned to the Department of Organic Chemistry as an assistant professor and continued his interest in the nucleophilic reactivity of sulfur compounds by examining the mechanism of thiocyanate–isothiocyanate isomerization reactions, border-line reactions, internal return phenomena and ion pair effects. In 1966–67, Alberto spent a year as a post-doctoral fellow at UCLA with Prof. Samuel Winstein and joined the spirited debate with Prof. H.C. Brown on classical and non-classical carbenium ions.

In 1969, after his return to Padova, he moved to the Department of Physical Chemistry where he began to examine the potential for metal stabilization of otherwise unstable, charged organic intermediates. One story is told that his discovery of the isomerization of benzyl thiocyanate to the isothiocyanate upon complexation of the phenyl ring with chromium tricarbonyl came about because of a desire to reduce the smell of the thiocyanate. A set of kinetic studies into the stabilization of both anionic and cationic intermediates by metal coordination fixed Alberto’s research agenda. In 1972 he became Privat-dozent in Physical Organic Chemistry and rose to the rank of professor in 1980.

A mutual interest in the geometric consequences of bis(chromium tricarbonyl) arene compounds resulted in a productive collaboration between one of us (TEB) and Alberto that later expanded into a tri-national collaboration with the inclusion of the creative Germany synthetic chemist Dr Dietmar Kuck. Recently, Alberto has turned his

energies on rhodium and iridium substituted indenyl chromium tricarbonyl where the two metals compete for electron density from the indenyl group with surprising consequences for the reactivity of the Group VIII metal.

In addition to the elegant chemistry guided by Alberto there is a spirit of generosity, kindness and warmth that makes his laboratory unique. As evidenced by this volume, Alberto's quiet enthusiasm inspires his students and colleagues to remarkable levels of devotion. A discussion of chemistry in his high-ceilinged office in Padova or on a trail in the Idaho mountains is guaranteed to bring forth creative ideas catalyzed by his deep understanding of chemistry and people. It is to this exceptional colleague and friend that the contributors dedicate this volume in honor of his 65th birthday. May Alberto and his lovely wife Francesca continue to enrich our lives for many more years.

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