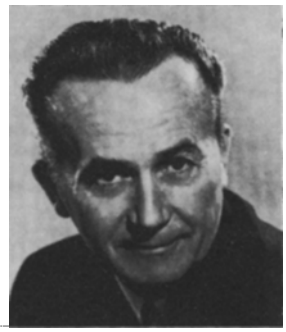
Dr. George Popjak to receive Award in Lipid Chemistry



Dr. George J. Popjak has been named to receive the 13th Award in Lipid Chemistry from the American Oil Chemists' Society. The award will be presented during the society's 1977 annual meeting to be held in New York City May 9-12, 1977. Dr. Popjak is a professor in the department of biological chemistry and psychiatry at the University of California in Los Angeles.

The award, established in 1964, is presented to an outstanding scientist in the field of lipid chemistry. It recognizes the accomplishment of outstanding original research in lipid chemistry, the results of which have been presented through publication of technical papers of high quality. The award is accompanied by a $2,500 honorarium from Applied Science Laboratories in State College, PA.

Dr. Popjak contributed significantly to the basic body of knowledge regarding fatty acid and cholesterol biosynthesis. His major research interests have been metabolic pathways, sterol biosynthesis, and enzyme stereochemistry.

In the course of his early studies of fatty acid synthesis in the mammary gland he demonstrated that there had to be a chain elongation mechanism well before the enzymatic mechanisms were clarified. His laboratory developed what was probably the first effective solubilized enzyme system for fatty acid biosynthesis.

In the early 1950s, Dr. Popjak and his colleague, J.W. Cornforth, undertook an exhaustive series of painstaking studies on the pathways for sterol synthesis and the stereochemistry involved. Between 1953 and 1957, they established the origin of every carbon atom in the ring structure of cholesterol (excepting C-7) as originating from either the carboxyl- or methyl-carbon of acetate.

Soon after the discovery of mevalonate in 1956, Drs. Popjak and Cornforth developed a chemical synthesis that allowed the specifical labeling of mevalonate and they showed how the mevalonate carbons are incorporated into the sterol molecule.

In the 1960s, Dr. Popjak continued to explore the complex chemistry of farnesyl pyrophosphate synthesis and its conversion to squalene. In the course of these studies, Drs. Popjak and Cornforth synthesized stereospecifically labeled farnesyl pyrophosphate and proved it was the *trans-trans* form that was utilized in forming squalene.

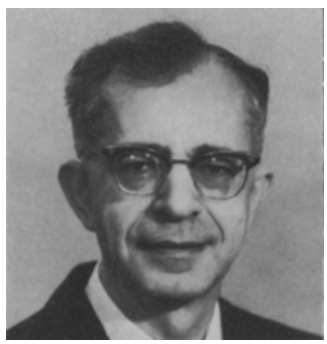
Since coming to the United Stated in 1968, Dr. Popjak has become interested in the regulation of sterol metabolism in man.

Dr. Popjak was born May 5, 1914, in Kiskundorozsma, Hungary, and attended the Royal Francis Joseph University in Szeged, Hungary, before joining the University of London staff in 1939 as a research assistant in the Department of Pathology. From 1941 to 1947, he was a lecturer in the St. Thomas Hospital Medical School's Department of Pathology at the University of London. From 1947 to 1953, he was a member of the scientific staff of the Medical Research Council at the National Institute for Medical Research in London. In 1953, he became director for the council's experimental radiopathology research unit. From 1962 to 1968, he was codirector of the Chemical Enzymology Laboratory in London for Shell Research, Ltd. In 1968, Dr. Popjak joined the faculty at the University of California in Los Angeles.

Dr. Popjak has won numerous scientific awards including the British Biochemical Society's Ciba Medal (jointly with J.W. Cornforth), the Stouffer prize (jointly with Dr. Cornforth), and the Royal Society of London's Davy Medal (jointly with Dr. Cornforth). He has published more than 175 scientific papers since 1936. He is a member of several professional and honorary groups, including the American Association of the Advancement of Science, the Biochemical Society (England); a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, London; and the New York Academy of Sciences.

He received his M.D. degree from Royal Francis Joseph University in 1938, his F.R.I.C. (Chemistry) in 1955 from the Royal Institute of Chemistry in London, England; and D.Sc. (Biochemistry) in 1961 from the University of London. He is a British citizen who has become a permanent resident of the United States. ●

Leo Goldblatt receives Bailey Award



Approximately 70 persons attended the North Central Section's 17th Annual Alton E. Bailey Award dinner last month to hear the recipient, Leo Goldblatt, talk on "Mycotoxins—Past, Present and Future."

Dr. Goldblatt was introduced by AOCS Vice President Tom Applewhite, a former colleague at the USDA's Western Regional Research Center. The Bailey Award was presented by Robert L. Husch, president of the North Central Section. Among those attending were V.C. Mehlenbacher, the first recipient of the award, and 1968 recipient H.J. Dutton.

Goldblatt told the group he was particularly grateful for the award in that he worked, during the early 1940s, for Dr. Bailey.

During his talk on mycotoxins, Dr. Goldblatt noted that for many years mycotoxins were not perceived as potentially harmful and as late as 1944 one researcher wrote that there was very little evidence that moldy food caused disease.

In 1960, poultry flocks in England were decimated by an affliction eventually traced to aflatoxin, perhaps the best-known mycotoxin, from peanut meal. About 1963, Idaho trout examined upon shipment to California were found to have hepatomas eventually traced to aflatoxin from cottonseed meal.

Research on aflatoxin began to expand, but as recently as five years ago, Dr. Goldblatt said, it was regarded primarily as a storage problem. Now researchers know it is also a field problem. By 1970, one writer noted there had been 1,000 articles on aflatoxins, Dr. Goldblatt said and then added that the total now is probably over 2,000. ●