

Preface

A Special Issue Dedicated to H C Brown on the Occasion of his 85th Birthday

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Few individuals have had as much impact on the field of organic chemistry as H C Brown (Herb Brown). Almost all multistage syntheses of complex molecules make use of at least one step that owes its success, either directly or indirectly, to fundamental researches carried out in the Brown group. Hydroboration, the many reactions of organoboranes and reductions with complex hydrides are amongst the better known, and it was for his work in boron chemistry that he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry, jointly with G Wittig, in 1979, the year after he formally 'retired' from his salaried position at Purdue University.

His contribution to fundamental mechanistic organic chemistry has been scarcely less important. He contributed greatly to our understanding of steric strains and electrophilic aromatic substitution and, of course, was a major player in the debate over non-classical carbocations. He is a prolific publisher, with over 1200 publications to his credit. Yet it is the quality of his publications, in terms of both the work reported and the style of its reporting, rather than the quantity, that has led to his becoming one of the most cited chemists of the modern era. The fundamental importance of his work is apparent from the fact that he is the most cited author in the latest edition of *Advanced Organic Chemistry* by J March, regarded by many as the primary bench-top source of information in organic chemistry.

It is remarkable that almost two decades after his 'retirement' he continues to generate a prodigious output of high quality work. Much of his work during this period has been in the field of asymmetric synthesis and it is therefore fitting that in the year when he celebrates his 85th birthday, *Tetrahedron: Asymmetry* should recognise his contributions by dedicating this special issue in his honour.

It is a privilege for me to edit the special issue. I was fortunate to have the opportunity of working with Herb in 1978-79 and learned much from observing his awesome ability to pinpoint the essence of a problem, his clarity of argument, and the facility with which he could present complex messages in a simple readable form. My wife and I also appreciated the kindness extended to us by Herb and his wife, Sarah, whom we came to regard as good friends. It is a pleasure to be able to pay tribute to them both through this special issue dedicated to Herb.

I was helped in commissioning the manuscripts by Dr P V Ramachandran, whom I thank. In the short time available for submission of papers, it was not possible to accommodate all who wanted to contribute. I apologise to those who could not be accommodated and to those who were not even afforded the opportunity. I thank those whose papers were included for making my job as guest editor so easy.

Keith Smith - November 1997