

PREFACE

The sesquiterpenes represent a large and structurally diverse group of natural products, members of which are found widely distributed throughout both the plant and animal kingdom. Although the majority of these compounds have been isolated from terrestrial plants, sesquiterpenes of marine origin are also common. The several thousand representatives of this class of natural products are derived *in vivo* from the relatively simple C₁₅ alcohol, farnesol, *via* a variety of different metabolic paths which lead ultimately to a rich assortment of structurally interesting molecules of varying levels of complexity.

These diverse structures have attracted the interest of many synthetic organic chemists, who have seen in them either a unique synthetic challenge or an opportunity to illustrate in a meaningful manner new synthetic methodology. Some indication of the level of activity in sesquiterpene synthesis is the observation that an entire recent volume of John Apsimon's series on natural products synthesis was devoted to a survey of this field by Clayton Heathcock.

The present symposium in print is designed to give a selective, but by no means comprehensive view of sesquiterpene synthesis in the few years following Heathcock's review. The manuscripts in this symposium include descriptions of the synthesis of representatives of a number of classes of sesquiterpenes, using both modern and traditional synthetic strategies. The authors of these papers were selected to provide an overview of the diverse contemporary approaches to this challenging and fascinating area of synthetic organic chemistry and to illustrate some of the applications of modern synthetic methods to this class of natural products.

JOHN W. HUFFMAN
H. L. Hunter Chemistry Laboratories
Clemson University
Clemson, SC 29634

September 20, 1987