



## **Stephen Prager**

**Professor of Chemistry, University of Minnesota, 1952–1990**

The son of a prominent mathematician, Stephen Prager was born in 1928 in Darmstadt, Germany. During the Nazi period, he emigrated with his family, first to Turkey and then to the United States. After obtaining the Bachelor's Degree at Brown University, Steve earned his Ph.D. in chemistry at Cornell University in 1951. After a year as a Research Fellow at the University of Utah, he came to Minnesota as Assistant Professor of Chemistry in 1952. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1956, and to Professor in 1962.

Steve was actually the founder of the Theoretical Chemistry Group at Minnesota, which now numbers seven faculty, but which in 1952 was regarded as something rather unusual and not necessarily desirable in a chemistry department. Steve's early and continuing achievements certainly have done much to pave the way for the growth and prosperity of the discipline at Minnesota and elsewhere.

Steve has made many important contributions to Theoretical Chemistry, mostly in various areas of Statistical Mechanics: Transport through thin membranes, Statistical Mechanics of microemulsions, coagulation and diffusion of polymers, behavior of polymers near surfaces, and theory of transport properties. Another area in which he made major contributions, especially in his earlier decades at Minnesota, is that of Molecular Quantum Mechanics. His work has always been characterized by elegance, clarity, and economy of means.

Throughout his career, Steve has been an outstanding teacher at all levels of Physical Chemistry. His teaching has been characterized not by flamboyance, nor by the currying of favor by sweeping difficulties under the rug, but by absolute honesty, clarity, and thoroughness. He has pioneered techniques of combining Classical with Statistical Thermodynamics, and has been instrumental in developing the instructional computing capabilities in the Chemistry Department at Minnesota.

Steve has served as Assistant Editor of the Transactions of the Society of Rheology, and as Associate Editor of the Journal of Physical Chemistry. He is a Fellow of the American Physical Society, and for many years was the only such Fellow in the Chemistry Department at Minnesota.

Never one to seek the limelight, to blow his own horn, or to demand special privileges or treatment, Steve has preferred to concentrate on pursuing all aspects of an academic career with great ability, honesty, and integrity. Despite the lack of advertising, the fine quality of his work is well known to those in a position to judge it.

On the occasion of his retirement, Steve was honored by a special symposium held at the University of Minnesota October 12 and 13, 1990. This special issue of *Theoretica Chimica Acta* contains six contributions based on talks or posters presented at the symposium, and two other papers contributed by admirers of Steve who were not able to be present at the symposium.

Fortunately for his many friends and colleagues, and for the discipline of theoretical chemistry, there is no indication that Steve's retirement will cause any diminution in his scientific activity. We can still look forward to many years of stimulating association with Stephen Prager.

C. Alden Mead  
University of Minnesota  
Guest Editor