



## Melvin S. Newman

March 10, 1908 - May 30, 1993

Mel Newman was born on March 10, 1908 in New York City and raised in New Orleans. With his passing on May 30, 1993, organic chemistry lost one of its foremost investigators, strongest proponents, and unusually engaging personalities. Professor Newman's love for laboratory research is legendary. His mastery and love of the game of golf was almost as equally impressive. Fortunately, he was able to pursue both activities well beyond his formal retirement date, virtually to the point when death came.

Professor Newman was educated at Yale University, receiving his B.S. degree *magna cum laude* in 1929 and his Ph.D. in 1932. He subsequently embarked on postdoctoral stints at Yale, Columbia, and Harvard. The last of these was spent in the laboratories of Louis Fieser, from whom he inherited an insatiable curiosity for the chemistry of polycyclic benzenoid hydrocarbons. Mel joined the Ohio State University Chemistry Department in 1936, where he was to remain scientifically active for more than 55 years. During his distinguished career, he directed the theses of over 110 students and enjoyed equally well his mentorship of many postdoctoral fellows. These students have been enriched by his character and philosophy, and organic chemistry has profited handsomely from the 350 publications that have emanated from the Newman group.

Mel always felt highly privileged to live in a society that paid him to teach and practice organic chemistry. And he excelled in these arenas of activity. Frustrated by the inability on the part of students to understand and fully appreciate stereochemistry, he developed his Newman projection formulas that gained him instant fame and prominence since the appearance of his seminal paper in 1952. A high point of his scientific career was reached when hexahelicene was prepared and resolved into its antipodes. Also notable was his development of the chemistry of esters and pseudoesters, of unique methodology for the generation and capture of unsaturated carbenes, and of sterically-strained compounds and reagents.

Professor Newman's extraordinary zeal arrived over to the area of steric effects, this intense interest culminating in the publication of the landmark book *Steric Effects in Organic Chemistry* in 1956. His philosophy of how to teach an undergraduate laboratory course is clearly spelled out in a later text entitled *An Advanced Organic Laboratory Course* (1976). Mel was never irreverent, but did hold strong opinions on how certain activities should be carried out. For example, his writing style was notably terse and his lectures were characteristically to the point, except for the joke or two that he had inevitably to interject.

Mel served on the editorial boards of the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, the *Journal of Organic Chemistry*, *Organic Syntheses*, and *Synthetic Communications*. He had been a Fulbright Lecturer and a Guggenheim Fellow. He was a member of the National Academy of Sciences. He received many honors for his scientific work including the Roger Adams Award from the American Chemical Society, the Morley Medal from the Cleveland ACS section, the Columbus Section Award, the Cross Medal from Yale University, and the Sullivan Medal from The Ohio State University. Professor Newman also held honorary degrees from the University of New Orleans, Bowling Green State University and The Ohio State University,

Professor Newman exhibited a great fondness for jazz, undoubtedly a result of his exposure to such music in his formative years. This brought Mel into a close friendship with Louis Armstrong whom he introduced to Bob Woodward at a time when both were simultaneously in Columbus. As the story goes Mel said to Louie: "Bob is to organic chemistry what you are to jazz." A party overhearing this responded "Dr. Woodward, you must be a hell of a chemist."

He is survived by his wife Beatrice (née Crystal), by their four children, and six grandchildren. Mel was a person of many facets. For us who remember him with affection and admiration, it gives great satisfaction to recognize that he served as a role model that will never be easy to overlook.

Leo A. Paquette  
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