



Ralph Lloyd Shriner

October 9, 1899 - June 7, 1994

Ralph Lloyd Shriner, Editor-in-Chief of Volume 27 of *Organic Syntheses*, published in 1947 and, with his wife, Rachel H., Coeditor of *Organic Syntheses, Cumulative Indices to Collective Volumes, I, II, III, IV, V*, published in 1976, died June 7, 1994 of pneumonia following surgery for a broken hip, in Lincolnshire, Illinois, at the age of 94. Following his term of service on the Board of Editors, during which Volume 27 was published, Dr. Shriner became a member of the Advisory Board, and was elected to the Board of Directors in 1951, and served as Vice President from 1974 to 1976, before retiring from the Board in 1977. Dr. Shriner was a dedicated and valuable member and senior statesman of the Board of Directors and of its Finance Committee, where his wise and conservative advice, particularly with respect to bonds, was much appreciated. Collective Volume VI of *Organic Syntheses* was dedicated to Ralph and Rachel Shriner.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri on October 9, 1899, Ralph Shriner was the oldest of the two children of George B. Shriner and Edith Barnett Shriner. His father worked as an agent for the railroad for some years. Ralph and sister, Ruth, attended public schools in St. Louis. During the summers, Ralph worked on his Uncle Al's farm in Cuba, Missouri, in the Ozarks, southwest of St. Louis. His uncle also owned the Ford Model T dealership, and one of Ralph's jobs was to go to the freight yard with his cousin Jim, assemble the cars, and drive them to the sales yard. Thus, Ralph learned to drive at the tender age of 12. Uncle Al also became the owner of the local telephone company, after it went bankrupt, and Ralph and his cousin Jim became the line repair boys, learning how to fix the phones, climb the poles, and maintain the wires. In his teens, Ralph built his own radio receiver and transmitter and became a ham radio operator. He was active in the Boy Scouts, became an Eagle Scout, and later served as a scoutmaster.

Ralph joined the U. S. Army and was finishing his basic training in 1918 when Germany surrendered, ending World War I. After receiving his honorable discharge from the army, Ralph entered Washington University in his hometown, where he majored in chemical engineering. He received a B.S. degree in 1921 and then stayed on for the year 1921-22 as Instructor in Chemistry.

In 1922 he began graduate work in organic chemistry at the University of Illinois, receiving an M.S. degree in 1923 and a Ph.D. degree in 1925 under Roger Adams. From 1925 to 1927 he served as a Research Associate and Assistant Professor at the New York College of Agriculture Experiment Station in Geneva, New York, and also held a joint appointment at Cornell University. While in Geneva, Ralph met a young researcher, Rachel Haynes, and they were married on August 17, 1929 in Springfield, Massachusetts. Their daughter, Joan (now Palincsar), was born on July 25, 1932.

In 1927 Ralph returned to the University of Illinois as an Assistant Professor and worked his way through the ranks to become a full Professor. In 1941 he moved to Indiana University to become a Professor of Chemistry and Chairman of the Chemistry Department, which had not yet been accredited by the American Chemical Society. He led a revamping of the curriculum and, in 1942, the department was accredited. The library was improved, a trained chemistry librarian was appointed, and a shop was established. With the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the subsequent entrance of the United States into World War II, there was much work to be accomplished, including the instruction of many soldiers. Ralph was also heavily involved in war research with the Committee on Medical Research (CMR), Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD), and the Army and Navy, particularly with respect to the synthesis of compounds having antimalarial properties. After the war ended in 1945, Ralph took a one year sabbatical leave in 1946-47, during which he revised his textbook, "The Systematic Identification of Organic Compounds," and did some editing.

In 1947 Ralph moved to the University of Iowa (then called the State University of Iowa), in Iowa City, as Professor of Chemistry. He served as Chairman of the Chemistry Department from 1952 to 1963. Ralph and Rachel had a cabin on Lake McBride, and devoted quite a bit of work to it, particularly to the building of a dock, a rowboat from a kit, and a fireplace, where Ralph laid all the blocks and bricks and rolled in 150 wheelbarrow loads of cement. Ralph and Rachel also added bowling to their long-time expertise in bridge, and many other activities.

In 1963 Ralph "retired" and he and Rachel moved south to Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, where his colleague, Harold Jeskey, became one of his closest friends. Ralph served as Visiting Professor of Chemistry from 1963 to 1978, when he retired again, but continued to live near the University, at 2709 Hanover St., in University Park, Dallas, until 1991. To escape the hot Texas summers, Ralph and Rachel would migrate in June like the birds in spring and fall to Deer River, in northern Minnesota. There, probably as a result of their University of Illinois connections, they had a little cabin on (Big) Deer Lake at Interlaken Camp, so named because it is located between Big and Little Deer Lakes (their cabin was near that of the late William E. Parham, Editor-in-Chief of Volume 44 of *Organic Syntheses*, and a member of the Board of Directors, Vice President, and Treasurer of *Organic Syntheses*).

While recovering from abdominal surgery, Rachel died unexpectedly on September 10, 1980, ending a happy partnership of 51 years. Ralph spent the next 11 years in Dallas, where he did all of his own housework and chores. He also continued to migrate to Deer River, Minnesota each summer through 1990. At the age of 90, he built a flight of

stone steps up the cliff from Deer Lake. In 1991, Ralph moved to Skokie, Illinois to be closer to his daughter, Joan Palincsar (A. B. Mount Holyoke College; M.S. and Ph.D. Northwestern University) and her late husband Edward E., who, until recently, was a member of the faculty of the Biology Department at Loyola University in Chicago.

Following Ed's death, Ralph and Joan purchased in December 1993 a ranchstyle home in Lincolnshire, Illinois. In March of 1994, Ralph broke his hip and was recovering from hip surgery in a rehabilitation center, when he developed pneumonia in early June and died on June 7, 1994. He is survived by his daughter Joan Palincsar, his grandson Steven Palincsar (both of whom were very helpful in the preparation of this report), who also lives in Lincolnshire, and his granddaughters Suzanne Palincsar of Wheeling, Illinois, and Katherine Solk, of Chicago.

While at the University of Illinois, Ralph Shriner and his colleagues Carl S. Marvel and Reynold C. Fuson (Editor-in-Chief of *Organic Syntheses*, Volumes 5 and 11, and 18, respectively), established the senior research program in organic chemistry for undergraduate students. Following the system of identification of organic compounds originally published in the United States by Oliver Kamm (Editor-in-Chief of Volume 4 of *Organic Syntheses*), a former Illinois faculty member who had gone to Parke-Davis as Director of Research, R. L. Shriner and R.C. Fuson, and later D.Y. Curtin, published the classic laboratory text on qualitative analysis, "*The Systematic Identification of Organic Compounds*," which was first published in 1935 and has gone through six editions (the latest in 1980 with T.C. Morrill as an additional coauthor) and has been translated into Spanish, Japanese, and Russian. A seventh edition is scheduled to be published in 1996. Ralph Shriner was the author in 1942 of the first chapter (on the Reformatsky Reaction) of Volume I of *Organic Reactions*, which served as the editorial model for subsequent chapters in this valuable review series and sister publication of *Organic Syntheses*. He was the primary author of Chapter 4 on "Stereoisomerism" in Henry Gilman's classic "*Organic Chemistry, An Advanced Treatise*," John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, N. Y., 1st ed. (1938 pp. 150-405) and 2nd ed. (1943 pp. 214-488). The chapter was divided into 11 parts; Part H was coauthored by Roger Adams and Part XI was solely authored by Carl S. Marvel. Ralph Shriner was also a coauthor with Homer Adkins (Editor-in-Chief of Volume 26 of *Organic Syntheses*) of Chapter 9 on "Catalytic Hydrogenation and Hydrogenolysis" in the 2nd ed. (1943, pp. 779-834).

In 1950 Ralph Shriner was named Editor-in-Chief of *Chemical Reviews* and ably guided this important review journal in that capacity for 17 years (1950-1966). He was also a member of the Board of Editors of the *Journal of Organic Chemistry*. In 1956 Ralph Shriner was a coauthor with Walter T. Smith, Jr., of a short text, "*The Examination of New Organic Compounds, Macro and Semimicro Analytical Methods, a Laboratory Manual*," John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, N.Y., 136 pp.

Ralph Shriner became an American Chemical Society (A.C.S.) member as a student in 1919, and served as Secretary of the A.C.S. Division of Organic Chemistry from 1935 to 1940 and as its Chairman in 1944. He was an A.C.S. Councilor-at-Large from 1943 to 1946, and a Councilor from the Iowa Section in 1952 to 1953. He was a consultant to the Rohm and Haas Company of Philadelphia from 1938 until 1965. He was a member of the Chemistry panel on Cancer Chemotherapy at the National Service Center, National Cancer Institute, from 1959 to 1962 and served as its chairman from 1961 to 1962.

Besides the A.C.S., Ralph Shrinier was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (A.A.A.S.), Phi Lambda Upsilon (honorary chemical fraternity), Tau Beta Pi (honorary engineering fraternity), Phi Kappa Phi, and Sigma Xi (the Research Society).

More than 100 students completed their Ph.D. degrees with Dr. Shrinier. He and his students published over 150 papers in the areas of anthocyanins and flavylum salts, lignin model compounds, organic synthesis and structure, synthetic drugs, stereoisomerism, and organic chemical identification methods. Hundreds of students gained through Dr. Shrinier a knowledge of organic chemistry, an inspiration to scholarship, and an introduction to that added spark, the zest for living a full life. In 1962 he received the James F. Morris Award of the Northeastern Section of the American Chemical Society (A.C.S.) in recognition of his excellence in teaching. In 1966, Ralph Shrinier's former students and colleagues organized a special tribute to him at a luncheon at the New York Hilton Hotel, where many splendid tributes were given to this modest man. He received the Wilfred T. Doherty Award of the Dallas-Fort Worth Section of the A.C.S. in 1973 in recognition of his outstanding achievements in teaching and research. In 1989 the Chemistry Department at the University of Iowa established a distinguished professorship to be entitled the "Ralph L. Shrinier Professor of Synthetic Chemistry" in recognition of his contributions in teaching, research, and service as the department head.

Three "Shrinerisms" are:

- (1) "A good research man leaves you with more research problems than when he came, and a poor research man can go through more research problems than you can think up. "
- (2) "Establish your credit when you don't need money so that if you ever do need it, the bank will know who you are when you want or need them. "
- (3) "If you do it right there is a way to get the job done."

We shall miss this giant of organic chemistry, this warm and understanding friend, adviser, and contributor to so much of the success of *Organic Syntheses*.

Wayland E. Noland
October 17, 1995

Originally published in *Organic Syntheses*
Vol. 74, pp xxix-xxxiii