

Professor Binne Zwanenburg

A Tribute



I cannot think of an instance, at least one of which I was aware, in the unique world of Dutch chemistry (every country has its own idiosyncrasies) when an important decision was in the air that someone did not ask "what does Binne think about this?". And I cannot remember an instance in which the position of Binne, if not yet known, was not soon made so. Binne Zwanenburg has given greatly to chemistry in general by outstanding scientific contributions and to Dutch chemistry in particular in the form of enormous and creative personal insight.

Binne Zwanenburg was born in 1934 in Lippenuizen in the province of Friesland. He grew up as a native speaker of Frisian and still has an admirable facility with this dialect (Frisians are of the opinion, not without reason, that this is a true language both spoken and written). He received his Ph.D degree in 1962 at the University of Groningen under the supervision of Wiendelt Drenth, who was later to become professor in Utrecht. He had postdoctoral positions with Ralph Raphael at Glasgow in 1963 and with Nelson Leonard at the University of Illinois in 1964/1965. He was appointed associate professor at the University of Groningen in 1965.

During the period in Groningen, Binne Zwanenburg began work on organosulfur compounds in particular sulfines as well as on functionalized small-ring heterocycles. In addition to this chemistry, which quickly drew international attention, Binne became deeply involved with the plans for a new chemistry building in Groningen. He was instrumental in the planning of the facility and well as the execution of the building. Those of us who were there at the time particularly recall Binne sitting at his desk late at night poring over building plans, with his shoes off and feet in cold water in order to remain awake. Heavy use was also made of a large pot of coffee constantly at his side.

In 1971 Binne was appointed as the successor of Prof. Nivard in Nijmegen. He remained in this position until his retirement in 1999. During this period scientific work continued to be carried out on organosulfur compounds and strained rings. New interests were strained

polycyclic systems, flash vacuum thermolysis (FVT) including catalysis on clays, synthetic methodology and asymmetric synthesis, the use of enzymes in organic synthesis, work on *Strigol* and germination stimulants and natural product synthesis. This work has resulted in some 400 publications, one book and numerous contributions to proceedings. Binne Zwanenburg is member of the Royal Netherlands Chemical Society, American Chemical Society and Royal Society of Chemistry (London).

He has been guest professor at Dalhousie University in Halifax, the Science University in Tokyo and the University of Bologna. In 2000 he received the prestigious Holleman Award as particular recognition of his national accomplishments.

During the period in Nijmegen he was twice dean of the chemistry department as well as vice dean of the faculty of science. At the national level he was from 1975 through 1982 member (from 1978-1982 chairman) of the Advisory Committee of the Division of Natural Sciences of the Netherlands Organization for the Advancement of Pure Research (ZWO). In 1983 he became member of the Board of the Netherlands Foundation for Chemical Research (SON) and from 1985 until 1991 was chairman of this influential organization. From 1993-1996 Binne was chairman of the National Foresight Committee on Chemistry. Since 1996 he has been a member of the National Steering Committee Sustainable Chemical Technology (DTO). He is a past editor of the Dutch national chemical journal *Recueil des Travaux Chimiques des Pays-Bas*, which has now become part of the *European Journal(s) of (In)organic Chemistry*.

In addition he has evaluated chemical curricula in Flanders, has been a member of an evaluation committee for universities in Lower Saxony, has been a member of an international review committee for an interuniversity consortium chemistry for the environment in Italy and was chairman of the Scientific Committee for the 34th International Chemistry Olympiade held in Groningen in July, 2002.

Since his retirement in 1999 Binne has guided plans for the (long promised) new chemistry building in Nijmegen. Construction has begun!

These tasks have brought Binne Zwanenburg into contact with many different people in many walks of life. He is comfortable not only among his own kind, chemists, but also with policy makers, politicians, industrialists and people in general. People are always impressed by his openness, extraordinary range of knowledge, vision with a human touch and personal interest in his fellow persons. He has shown great skill in "getting things done". The capacity to deal with people is an indispensable part of such abilities. He has directed (or is still directing) some 86 Ph.D projects and many of his students now occupy important positions in industry and academia.

An activity that deserves separate mention is well summarized in the title of a Ph.D thesis (A.S. Mwakaboko, Nijmegen, March 25, 2003) "*Synthesis and Biological Evaluation of new Strigolactone Analogues as Germination Stimulants for the Seeds of the Parasitic Weeds Striga and Orobanche spp*" Binne Zwanenburg has long worked with the University of Dar es Salaam

in Tanzania in a multidisciplinary effort to control the *Strigol* weed. This project has met with much success with regard to the science, the cooperation with people and the alleviation of this serious agricultural problem. It typifies particularly well Binne's wide approach and very human approach to problems.

Supporting information is available

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