

Professor Csaba Szántay

A Tribute



This special issue of Arkivoc is to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the birth of Csaba Szántay on 4 January, 2008

Csaba SZÁNTAY was born in Hungary in 1928. After taking his chemical engineering degree from the Technical University of Budapest in 1950, he began work in the Institute of Organic Chemistry under the supervision of Prof. G. ZEMPLÉN (himself being a student of the Nobel Laureate Emil Fischer), in the field of carbohydrate chemistry. Later on his interest turned towards alkaloid chemistry, and the title of his Ph.D. thesis, submitted in 1955, was: "Syntheses Starting from Opianic Acid."

In 1962 he worked for three months in the Institute of Prof. RIECHE in Berlin, and his work resulted in a joint publication with E. SCHMITZ on the chemistry of diaziridines. In 1964 he spent a short period in Gif-sur-Yvette (France) financed by C.N.R.S. where he also worked with alkaloids in the department of Prof. Janot and Prof. Goutarel. He obtained his "Doctor of Science" degree in 1964 on the basis of his thesis: "Synthesis of Ipecac Alkaloids"

From 1965-66 he was a postdoctoral fellow at the State University of New-York at Buffalo with Prof. BARDOS in the Medicinal Chemistry Department working on potential cancer

therapeutic agents, mainly involving nucleosides. In addition he discovered the first example of a low pyramidal inversion rate in the secondary amino group of aziridines and made quantitative measurements of the phenomenon using nmr.

In 1967 he became Full Professor of Organic Chemistry at the Technical University of Budapest and in 1970, was elected a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

For the last decade he has dealt mainly with the syntheses of natural products, such as yohimbine-, and vinca-type alkaloids, morphine alkaloids, amphibian alkaloid epibatidine, prostanoids, insect hormones and pheromones. About 380 publications in international journals and several books resulted from the above work. He is regularly invited as a speaker at international conferences and congresses. He is also co-author of about 300 patents reflecting his good connection with the pharmaceutical industry and is the president of the Hungarian Inventors' Association. He is a member of the Editorial Board of "Medicinal Research Reviews" (USA), an Honorary Advisor to the Editorial Board of "Heterocycles" (Japan), to "Natural Product Letters", and "Trends in Heterocyclic Chemistry" (India).

As an undergraduate student working at the Department of Organic Chemistry of the Budapest University of Technology between 1965 and 1970 I attended his lectures. Ten years ago I joined to his research group and now I consider it a great honour to take part in the compilation this issue for his 80th birthday.

László Hazai

Department of Organic Chemistry,

Budapest University of Technology and Economics,

Research Group for Alkaloid Chemistry of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

H-1111 Budapest, Szt. Gellért tér 4.

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