



Richard E. Benson

May 8, 1920 - February 24, 1997

Richard E. Benson, Editor-in-Chief of Volume 51 of *Organic Synthesis*, died of emphysema on February 24, 1997.

Dick was born in Racine, Wisconsin in 1920. His parents later moved to Tempe, Arizona, which led to Dick's attending Arizona State University. He had originally planned to major in education and become a teacher, but he got hooked by an interesting chemistry course and set out to become a chemist instead.

Dick did so well in chemistry that he received a local award, and a young woman who was majoring in English and honing her literary skills on the college newspaper came around to interview the bright young awardee. It must have been a good interview, for soon he was dating his interviewer, Katherine MacPhail.

Dick received his B.S. at Arizona State in 1942 and then moved to the University of Nebraska to do doctoral research under Clifford S. Hamilton. He soon learned a lot about *Organic Syntheses*, for Hamilton was an editor of that then young publication.

Another important event occurred in 1942: Dick married Katherine MacPhail. His meager income as a teaching assistant was supplemented by Kay's income as a secretary.

Dick received his Ph.D. in organic chemistry from the University of Nebraska in 1946 and headed east to join the Central Research Department of the DuPont Company. His first project was to study the chemistry of a polyamide monomer, caprolactam.

Dick turned up some interesting chemistry of caprolactam and its O-alkyl imino ethers. He and collaborators went on to explore the chemistry of allene, for example, its reactions with acetylene, carbon monoxide, and tetrafluoroethylene.

He did extensive work on the chemistry of cyclooctatetraene and of ferrocene. In the

cyanocarbon area he collaborated on studies of the anion radical of tetracyanoethylene, that is, tetracyanoethylene bearing an extra electron. He was author or coauthor of 45 papers and 16 U.S. Patents that came out of the Central Research Department.

Since Dick bore responsibility well, DuPont's Central Research Department gave him more and more of it. He became a research supervisor in 1956, and an associate research director in 1967. He served as the Department's Director of Analytical Science in 1980 until his retirement in 1985.

Dick was very active in professional activities outside the laboratory. He was a founder of the Wilmington Organic Chemists Club in 1949 and was its first president. This was an organization that was very active for about 15 years before falling victim to TV and other evils. He was a leader of ChemVets, an organization of retired Delaware chemists who meet for lunch six or eight times a year to hear a technical lecture and swap tales of the good old days. He was on the ACS National Committee and helped the Technicians Division of the ACS come into being. Finally, he was founder of a group of a dozen DuPont chemists who have been meeting monthly for nearly 50 years to discuss scientific topics.

Dick was an exceptionally conscientious editor of *Organic Syntheses*. For example, when William Sheppard died before his term on the Board of Editor had expired, Dick, although retired from that Board, picked up Sheppard's unchecked assigned preps and saw to it that they all got checked.

Dick is survived by his wife, two daughters, and two grandchildren.

Blaine C. McKusick
August 5, 1997