

# Editor's Note

I always very much enjoyed conversing with Egbert Havinga. He had a way of making me feel good; even his goodbyes had a special ring of sincerity and honesty. The optimism Havinga had radiated in the last few months of his life had shielded me and others from the reality of his illness. On the morning of November 2, 1988, H. J. C. (Harry) Jacobs phoned and told me that Havinga's health was failing rapidly, but that he was still very interested in our project. He wanted to know the status of the Profiles series but did not want to bother me with asking. Havinga, Jacobs explained, "wanted to die in a friendly way, not disturbing people". My response, sent by telefax within the hour, was one of the most difficult I had ever written. Twenty days later, he was gone.

Havinga was a man who directed attention away from himself. His most self-effacing act was to keep the details of his fatal illness from his friends until the final moments. When I read the initial draft of this volume, I found much evidence of his selflessness in statements such as "Dallinga in 1951", "Kwestroo who synthesized", and "J. A. van der Linden and E. C. Wessels studied", but the accompanying references revealed that these were all Havinga students. It was Havinga's way of shining the light onto others, in his special gentlemanly manner.

Human beings were very important to Havinga, and in addition to being interested in their science, he was interested in them. According to a colleague, "Frequently, people would seek his advice on many matters, scientific, personal, and administrative. [Havinga] was very careful in formulating his responses, not wanting to impose his opinion, not wanting to make too much of a fuss ...", but wanting to offer as much as he could to be helpful. These, among his many fine traits, endeared Havinga to his friends and colleagues.

Since his earliest days as a professor of organic chemistry at Leiden University, Havinga paid much attention to teaching. He considered teaching of extreme importance, especially teaching beginning students. His students attest to the quality of Havinga's lectures, which were especially popular and attracted numerous auditors.

Havinga's science ranged from physical organic to pyrogenic chemistry. He worked in many diverse areas, and also published in many different specialized journals, in addition to publishing frequently in *Recueil des Travaux Chimiques des Pays-Bas* (the *Journal of the*

*Royal Netherlands Chemical Society*). Many readers of Havinga's autobiography will be pleasantly surprised at his (Havinga would probably say his students') broad contributions.

Together with his esteemed colleague Luitzen Oosterhoff, Havinga recognized and subsequently published in 1961 "the first hint" of orbital symmetry control of concerted organic reactions. For me, personally, seeing the figure that appears on page 36 of this book brought back vivid and telling memories. As a young graduate student in William G. Dauben's laboratory in 1967, I had eagerly devoured a tiny paperback booklet, the Ph.D. thesis of Oosterhoff's student Van der Lugt, to understand what was influencing the photochemical reactions of the 1,3-cyclohexadienes I was studying. That figure and many of Havinga's papers served as the key references for my research.

As an academic chemist, Havinga enjoyed his frequent scientific contacts with industrial laboratories. And clearly, the Dutch chemical industry was proud of its association with Havinga; at least three corporations that supported the Profiles series had connections with him. Havinga was also happy about two additional marks he left at Leiden: his role in establishing chairs in theoretical organic chemistry and biochemistry in the early 1950s, the latter being the first of its kind in The Netherlands. In addition, Havinga spoke with delight on the planning of the new chemistry laboratories. I still recall the majesty of the Gorlaeus Laboratories when I first saw the beautiful complex. Havinga enthusiastically took part in its design, "stimulated by his thorough interest and feeling for art and architecture," according to a friend.

Havinga had many interests in addition to science. His attention included music—he played the piano with expertise—photography, sports, and nature. He strongly admired nature's beauty. Earlier than many others, he recognized the detrimental effect of human activities on the environment. And he had a remarkable reputation as a strong, very strong indeed, tennis player, as many participants of the Bärnstock and other conferences will attest.

It brought Havinga considerable comfort that Harry Jacobs would complete the arduous and significant final tasks associated with this volume. This comfort was well placed, for Jacobs has responded immediately to all of my many requests.

Over the past 2 years, I have remained in infrequent but regular contact with Mrs. Havinga, a most lovely lady. Her feelings of continued sadness regarding her husband's passing are shared by many, for Egbert Havinga was a true gentleman, a kind individual, a good friend, and a seminal scientist.

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