

Preface

It is a privilege to provide the preface to the special issue of *Heterocycles* honoring Professor Albert I. Meyers, a world leader in synthetic methodology and target oriented synthesis, on his 70th birthday. Many of Al Meyers' influential contributions involve original and creative uses of heterocyclic compounds. His publication in the 1970's of asymmetric carbon-carbon bond formations using chiral oxazolines initiated this field of modern asymmetric synthesis. Prior to his work, reactions which gave low enantiomeric ratios were known but of limited use by synthetic chemists. After his work, which demonstrated high enantiomeric ratios to be readily achievable, the field of asymmetric synthesis developed quickly to its predominant position in organic chemistry. Al Meyers' subsequent work on asymmetric synthesis continued to set standards and his work on directed lithiations using heterocyclic functionality was highly influential in shaping that field. Professor Meyers' leadership position in organic chemistry is solidly based on the work which is outlined in the following Tribute.

In this preface, however, I wish to note other aspects of Al Meyers' career. He holds the highest standards for accomplishment which are demonstrated in his published work and lectures and also in his mentoring of students and postdoctoral associates, by the leadership positions he has held in the American Chemical Society, as an active and advisory editor, and in his famous letters to the editor and infamous memos to his research group. He is an exceptional colleague, always willing to share ideas and information, to provide insight about chemistry and chemists, and to give credit to others. In accepting an honor, he generously mentions his mentors, Kurt Mislow, J. J. Ritter, Ted Taylor, Harry Wasserman, and Harry Walborsky.

Al Meyers has an always-stimulating presence. His irrepressible enthusiasm for chemistry and his open nature are remarkable. Some years ago at a Gordon Research Conference Al surprised the audience (and the conference chairman) by turning half of his lecture over to a colleague whom he had met while traveling to the meeting. Al simply felt his new friend needed an opportunity to present his own work. Very few chemists would be willing to give up presentation of their own results, but such inclusive acts are characteristic of Al Meyers. The discussions, which provided the postulate of the complex induced proximity effect as a widely applicable rationale for a number of novel and useful reactions in organolithium chemistry, are only one example. Many organic chemists have benefited from Al Meyers' advice, encouragement, and kindness. Whenever there is a problem in the community, Al Meyers is usually the first to call and offer support.

He also seeks new challenges. After he had very quickly established himself as a significant contributor to the field, rising rapidly to the rank of Professor at LSU, he moved briefly to Wayne State University and then to Colorado State University where he has been for the rest of his career. In that capacity, he was a major force in the meteoric rise of that department to front line status in world chemistry. His courage has also been demonstrated in a manner in which he has dealt with his recent health problems. He is

today dedicated, committed, and enthusiastic about chemistry as he has been throughout his career.

He has had the support of a wonderful wife, Joan, a noted artist in her own right, a supportive family including his son Harold, who is an accomplished organic chemist, and daughters Jill and Lisa who are in the legal profession.

Professor Albert Meyers is a chemist of wide influence, an exceptional role model, and a generous colleague. I am delighted to join his colleagues around the world in congratulating him on his many accomplishments on his 70th birthday.

Peter Beak
Urbana, Illinois
May 25, 2002