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47. Zbigniew Jedlinski

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Personalities in Polymer Science



Zbigniew Jedliński

Zbigniew Jedliński is a name, prominently associated with ring-opening reactions and the polymerization of heterocyclic monomers. He also played an important role in the utilization of naphthalene derived phenols and dicarboxylic acids for their use in polyesters synthesis.

Zbigniew Jedliński was born on October 8, 1922 in Warsaw, the capital of Poland, and attended elementary and high school there. The outbreak of World War II in 1939 interrupted Zbigniew's education and brought enormous hardship to him and his family, and the death of his father in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Zbigniew joined the Polish underground and continued his education privately by university professors.

In 1947 Zbigniew Jedliński entered the famous Polytechnic University in Gdańsk and obtained his Master's degree in chemistry in 1950. He received his Ph.D. from the same university and was awarded the Doctor of Chemical Sciences degree in 1958. He was appointed assistant professor at the Polytechnic University of Gdańsk and worked on the chemical structure and on the modification of lignin and cellulose. In order to become more proficient on technology he joined research laboratories of chemical factories in Gdańsk.

In 1960 Zbigniew moved to Gliwice and began working on the development of

synthetic resins and paint formulations. For his achievements on the new resins and the antifouling paints he was awarded the National Prize in Science and Technology in 1964.

In 1961 Jedliński was appointed Director for Research at the Central Research Institute for Plastics in Gliwice. He was still involved in industrial research, but he became also active as Professor of Macromolecular Science at the Silesian Technical University in Gliwice. During this period he developed novel thermally stable and chemically resistant, segmental engineering polymers and was awarded his second National Prize in Science and Technology.

In 1968, the Polish Academy of Sciences established the new Research Center—the Institute of Polymer Chemistry in Zabrze (Silesia) and Jedliński was appointed the Director of this institute, a position which he still holds to this day. In 1971, Zbigniew Jedliński was elected a Corresponding Member and, in 1980, he became a Full Member of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Zbigniew Jedliński has been active in macromolecular chemistry since 1950. After the completion of his studies on thermally stable polymers and composites, he became interested in ionic polymerization. His interest was initially cationic ring-opening polymerization and copolymerization of dioxolanes, tetrahydrofuran and trioxane. He then worked on oxirane and aldehyde chemistry and polymerization with special emphasis on α -substituted glycid-aldehyde derivatives, e.g. α -methyl glycid-aldehyde.

More recently, Jedliński's scientific activities expanded to biodegradable and biocompatible polymers, similar to the naturally occurring poly(β -hydroxybutyrate)s. These synthetic polyesters are of interest in surgery as endoprostheses, and for controlled drug delivery systems. The newest scientific interest of Zbigniew Jedliński is concerned with novel initiator systems for anionic polymerization, the polymerization of lactones with strong nucleophiles by proton abstraction or electron transfer.

Zbigniew Jedliński's international recognition over the last 20 years was extensive. He has been an invited speaker at a number of IUPAC Polymer Symposia

and IUPAC Congresses. He was also a visiting scientist in Italy, South Korea, Russia, USA and Japan. Jedliński is active in numerous international organizations. He is a member of the Macromolecular Division of IUPAC. At three international symposia on macromolecules he served as a chairman. He was elected a Fellow of Royal Society—Chemistry (London) and is a member of other scientific societies. In 1990 he was appointed Chairman of the Macromolecular Group of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Jedliński's scientific contributions are considerable and are published in over 300 papers; he has also edited 3 books and holds over 50 Polish and foreign patents. Zbigniew Jedliński has also been and is serving as Editor of the Polish Journal of Applied Chemistry and on editorial boards of 2 foreign international journals.

Zbigniew Jedliński has received numerous national and international awards and honors. In 1981, he obtained a Humboldt's professorship and worked as a visiting professor in Germany. In 1981 he received the Medal of the University in Mainz, in 1985 the Doebereiner Medal from the University of Jena, in 1974 the Medal from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. He has been awarded the Polish National Prize for Scientific Achievements (four times: 1964, 1976, 1984, 1986) the Prize of the President of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Prizes of the Minister of High Education (four times: 1972, 1978, 1989, 1993) and recently (1994) he has received the Order of Merits 1st Class with star "Polonia Restituta"—one of the highest distinctions of the Republic of Poland.

Jedliński has had a facility of establishing close ties of human and scientific relationships everywhere, and has a great number of friends all over the world. Over 200 M.S. students, 40 Ph.D. students and 15 young professors received their degrees and positions in chemistry while being associated with Zbigniew Jedliński.

Since 1951, Zbigniew Jedliński has been married with Anne Celine Tarnowski-Rojek; they have one daughter, Magdalene, also a chemist. In addition to his devotion to chemical research Zbig has various hobbies. He has been and still is interested in sports. As a young man he was a very active highly skilled down hill skier, sailor and also a pilot of sport aircrafts. Even though he is

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not young any more, he is still sailing and skiing.

He is also interested in the arts, in literature and in the history of the XX Century. In his leisure time he is involved in humanitarian activities to help victims of the war in Kazakhstan and African countries.

This article has been submitted by Otto Vogl, Herman F. Mark Professor of Polymer Science, Polytechnic University, Brooklyn NY.