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60. Teiji Tsuruta

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Personalities in Polymer Science



Teiji Tsuruta

Honoring Professor Teiji Tsuruta on his 75th Birthday

We are honoring in this issue, a scientist, a professional leader, a warm personality of integrity, dependability and trust, *Teiji Tsuruta*. His scientific contributions could be summarized as follows: Reactivity, Stereoselectivity and Application of Organometallic Compounds in Polymerization Reactions. In actual fact, Tsuruta established the stereochemistry of propylene oxide polymerization and its polymerization to optically active poly(propylene oxide) with chiral initiators.

Teiji Tsuruta was born in Kotohina, Kagawa prefecture, Japan as the son of Junzo and Yasu Tsuruta on January 1, 1920, the ninth year of the reign of Emperor Taisho. He grew up in Okayama, where he attended high school and graduated in 1939. He then entered Kyoto University, which was then the Kyoto Imperial University. He studied in the Department of Industrial Chemistry, Faculty of Engineering, graduating in 1941. He returned to Kyoto University in 1945 and received the degree of Doctor of Engineering in 1953. His thesis advisor was Professor Ryohhei Oda and the title of his thesis was "Studies of Organic Reaction Mechanism with Active Methylene Compounds".

As early as 1941 Teiji Tsuruta was appointed Junior Research Associate at

the Institute for Chemical Research at Kyoto University. He then became a Research Associate at the Faculty of Engineering and was appointed in 1951 an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Chemical Research. Thereafter, in 1956 Teiji Tsuruta moved to the Faculty of Engineering at Kyoto University. Today we would call this position Associate Professor. In 1962, Teiji Tsuruta obtained an appointment to the Chair of Professor at the Faculty of Engineering of Kyoto University.

In October 1964 Teiji Tsuruta received and accepted a call to the Chair of Professor of Engineering at the University of Tokyo. He remained at the position until his retirement in 1980, when Tsuruta became 60, the mandatory retirement age of the Tokyo University.

In April of 1980, Professor Tsuruta moved to the Science University of Tokyo (SUT) as Professor of Engineering. He was in this position for several years and became ultimately the Dean of Engineering at the Rika Daigaku (SUT). In 1985 Professor Tsuruta was appointed Director of the Research Institutes for Science and Technology of SUT. Thereafter, he served as the founding Director of the Research Institute for Biosciences of SUT from 1989–1994. As of January 1995, Professor Tsuruta returned to the Engineering School of SUT.

Professor Tsuruta was the thesis advisor of 45 PhD students, one half of them are now University Professors, while the other half are working in industry in the most active part of their life.

As a scientist, Professor Tsuruta was a prolific writer and published nearly 300 scientific papers from 1942–1995 on such subjects as: Stereochemistry in Oxirane Polymerizations Initiated by Organometallic Compounds, Molecular Level Elucidation of Stereoselective and Stereoelective Polymerizations of Methyloxirane (Propylene oxide) Using Well-Defined Organozinc Complexes Mechanistic Features of the Polymerization of N-Carboxy- α -Amino Acid Anhydrides, Novel Copolymerization Reactions with Organometallic Compounds, Anionic Polymerizations of Polar Vinyl Monomers with Organometallic Catalysts, Macromolecular Complexing Agents and Activated Metal Alkyls and the Application of Lithium Alkylamide for the Synthesis of Functional Polymers Having Amino Groups, for several years he

published extensively and produced more than 50 papers on new polymeric materials designed for biomedical applications.

Teiji Tsuruta has been unusually active in the publication of scientific Journals. In Japan, he was Editor-in-Chief of the Journals: *High Polymer*, *Journal of the Chemical Society of Japan*, *Collected Papers in High Polymers and Polymer Journal*; he was also the *Regional Editor of Die Makromolekulare Chemie* and of *Reactive Polymers*. He also served on the Editorial Board of several other Journals.

Since 1989, Teiji Tsuruta has been serving as one of the founding Editors of the *Journal of Biomaterials Science-Polymer Addition*, with C.H. Bamford and S.L. Cooper.

In his professional activities Teiji Tsuruta achieved high ranks in a number of Japanese Societies. He was the President of the Society of Polymer Science, Japan, and of the Chemical Society of Japan and he is now an honorary life member of the two Societies. The Japanese Society of Biomaterials also bestowed on him an honorary membership.

Other honors awarded Teiji Tsuruta are the G. Stafford Whitby Award, the Award of the Chemical Society of Japan, the Award for Distinguished Service to Polymer Science and the Award of the Japanese Society of Biomaterials. He also received an honorary doctoral degree (Docteur honoris causa) from the University Louis and Marie Curie (Paris).

Numerous were Tsuruta's activities as Plenary and Invited main lecturer in International Symposia. In his earlier career, these invitations were related to his activities in Polymer Chemistry, later they were related to his achievements in Biomaterials. Professor Tsuruta was highly regarded as lecturer, for example as guest Professor of Academies of Poland, the former Soviet Union and China. Tsuruta was also appointed as a scientist for the U.S.-Japan Eminent Scientific Exchange Program (NSF-JPSP) and lectured throughout the U.S. for two months.

Teiji Tsuruta has also functioned as Chairman of many National and International Committees on Polymers and Biomaterials and was Leader, Chairman and Co-Chairman of International and Bilateral Symposia, Conferences and Seminars.

Some of the readers of this article may note from Tsuruta's photo some deformation on his ear. This was caused by injuries obtained during his Judo training when he was in Okayama High School for three years. Tsuruta is a holder of the black belt, a high rank bestowed for achievements in Judo. Teiji Tsuruta believes at least some of his good health comes from the physical training he was subjected to by the Judo training in his youth.

Professor Tsuruta has been married since 1946 to the former Sachiko Fukuda, they have one daughter, Kumiko.

I am particularly proud to consider myself a close friend of Professor Tsuruta. On his 75th anniversary, I would like to wish him and his family the very best for a long healthy life of continued happiness.

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