

## Gerrit L'ABBÉ

Born: December 13, 1940 (Oostende)

Died: August 27, 1996 (Leuven)

Gerrit obtains his master's degree at the University of Leuven in 1963, taking his doctoral degree in 1966 (mentor Professor Georges Smets). The next two years he does postgraduate research at the University of Erlangen (Professor Hans J. Bestman) followed by another two years as a Fulbright Fellow at Boulder University (Colorado) with Professor Alfred Hassner. On his return he becomes an assistant at the University of Leuven, upgrades as assistant professor in 1972 and professor in 1977.

He first starts up a research team of organic chemistry with professor Georges Smets, but before long become independent with his associate Georges J. Hoornaert.

In 1988 he becomes corresponding member of the Royal Academy of Belgium for sciences and arts and is admitted as a working member in 1990.

He is co-founder of the Belgian Organic Syntheses Symposium (1986) and is elected president in 1990.

### Scientific Achievements

L'Abbé writes over 250 articles for international journals and is in great demand as a lecturer on international conventions on the chemistry of heterocyclic compounds.

He obtains his Ph.D. degree with a contribution on polymer chemistry.

During his stay in Erlangen and Boulder he specializes in the study of the nitrogen containing heterocyclic compounds as well as the sulphur and oxygen containing molecules. He studies the transformations of the  $\pi$ -rich heterocycles (pyrrol) and the  $\pi$ -deficient systems (pyridine) and his team comes up with the fact that side-chains of a ring build a new ring whilst the original ring opens. He is also interested in the chemistry of the hypervalent sulphurcontaining heterocycles where sulphur has a covalence of 3 or 4, while in the traditional organic molecules the covalence never exceeds 2. The analysis of the reaction mechanism is proven by using NMR methods.

Till shortly before his death, L'Abbé takes on the supramolecular chemistry and especially the synthesis and properties of dendrimers. Those molecules have a central nucleus branching repeatedly off, more or less like the growth of the crown of a tree.

Gerrit L'Abbé is awarded a number of prizes and titles:

-1966: the Jean Stas Prize and the Belgium Chemical Society Award;

-1971: the Award of the Bulletin of the Chemical Industry;

-1973: the Breckpot Prize

-1979: visiting professor with a fellowship of the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science.