

Silicon Valley Chemist

Santa Clara Valley Section

American Chemical Society

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Noble Science and Nobel Lust Disclosing Tribal Secrets

Dr. Carl Djerassi

Abstract:

Scientists operate within a very tribal culture whose rules, mores and idiosyncrasies are generally not communicated through specific lectures or books, but rather are acquired through a form of intellectual osmosis in a mentor-disciple relationship. Scientific "street smarts" – in some respects the soul and baggage of contemporary scientific behavior – are absorbed by observing the mentor's self-interested concerns with publication practices and priorities, the order



of the authors, the choice of the journal, the striving for academic tenure, grantsmanship, Schadenfreude – even Nobel lust. On their own, budding scientists discover the glass ceiling for women in a male-dominated enterprise, the inherent collegiality of scientific research, and the concurrent brutal competition. Most of these issues are related to the desire for personal recognition and even financial rewards, and each is colored by ethical nuances.

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April Dinner Meeting

Date: Wednesday, April 26

Time: Social hour: 6-7 pm

Dinner: 7-8 pm

Presentation: 8:15 pm

Speaker: Dr. Carl Djerassi

Location: Roche Bioscience
3401 Hillview Avenue
Palo Alto, California

Reservations: Shirley Radding
(408) 246-2564
(408) 296-8625 Fax
sradding@att.net

Reservations should be made by April 21 stating name, company affiliation, number of people in party and meal preference. People can also register using our web site: www.scvacs.or/Local_Folder/din_mtg.html

Cost: \$25.00 with choice of Chicken Breast stuffed with spinach and ricotta cheese; Pork tenderloin with plum sauce; or vegetarian pasta

Book Order

There will be an opportunity to purchase autographed copies of Dr. Djerassi's books for a discount. If you are interested in buying one or more books, use the form below or call Ean Warren at (650) 329-4554.

Name _____ Phone No. _____

Address _____

The cost of each book, including shipping and discount, is:

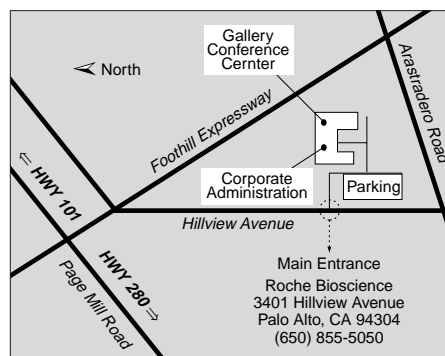
- Cantor's Dilemma** (Paperback) \$9
- The Bourbaki Gambit** (Paperback) \$9
- Menachem's Seed** (Paperback) \$9
- NO** (Hardcover) \$17

Please send this order form to: **Shirley Radding** 2994 Cottonwood Court
Santa Clara, CA 95051

Chair's Message

In the past week, I've been reminded of two opposing events in chemical history. Last week (Sunday, March 5), the San Jose Mercury News ran an article about Warren M. Anderson, the chair of the Union Carbide at the time of the accident in Bhopal, India.

In 1984, methyl isocyanate, among other toxic compounds, was released from a pesticide production facility killing more than 3,000 people and injuring another 200,000-500,000. The article was more about the subsequent lawsuits than the accident



itself, but it reminded me how incidents like these remain in the collective memory of mankind for a long time, long after even the lawsuits have been settled, staining the reputation of chemistry and chemists.

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To me – as a scientific tribesman for over four decades – it is important that the public does not look at scientists primarily as nerds, Franksteins or Strangeloves. And because science-in-fiction (in contrast to science fiction) deals not only with real science, but more importantly with real scientists too, I shall illuminate some of these topics behind the scrim of fiction from my tetralogy of science-in-fiction novels.

Biography:

Carl Djerassi, born in Vienna and educated in the US, is a writer and professor of chemistry at Stanford University. Author of over 1200 scientific publications and seven monographs, he is one of the few American scientists to have been awarded both the National Medal of Science (in 1973, for the first synthesis of a steroid oral contraceptive – “the Pill”) and the National Medal of Technology (in 1991, for promoting new approaches to insect control). A member of the US National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as well as many foreign academies, Djerassi has received 17 honorary doctorates together with numerous other honors, such as the first Wolf Prize in Chemistry, the first Award for the Industrial Application of Science from the National Academy of Sciences, and the American Chemical Society’s highest award, the Priestley Medal.

For the past decade, he has turned to fiction writing, mostly in the genre of “science-in-fiction,” whereby he illustrates, in the guise of realistic fiction, the human side of scientists and the

personal conflicts faced by scientists in their quest for scientific knowledge, personal recognition, and financial rewards. In addition to novels (Cantor’s Dilemma; The Bourbaki Gambit; Marx, deceased; Menachem’s Seed; NO), short stories (The Futurist and Other Stories), and autobiography (The Pill, Pygmy Chimps, and Degas’ Horse), he has recently embarked on a trilogy of plays which he describes in his web site as “science-in-theatre” – with an emphasis on contemporary cutting-edge research in the biomedical sciences. “An Immaculate Misconception,” first performed in abbreviated form at the 1998 Edinburgh Fringe Festival and subsequently (1999) as a full, 2-act play in London (New End Theatre), San Francisco (Eureka Theatre) and Vienna (under the title UNBEFLECKT at the Jugendstiltheater), focuses on the ethical issues inherent in recent spectacular advances in the treatment of male infertility through single sperm injection (the ICSI technique). He is also the founder of the Djerassi Resident Artists Program near Woodside, California, which provides residencies and studio space for artists in the visual arts, literature, choreography and performing arts, and music. Over 1000 artists have passed through that program since its inception in 1982. There is a web site about Carl Djerassi’s writing at www.djerassi.com



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LITERATURE SEARCHES

In contrast, on Saturday, March 11, I attended the dedication of the E.O. Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory as a National Historic Chemical Landmark, in commemoration of the discovery of 14 new elements at the facility. These included elements berkelium, californium, einsteinium, fermium, mendelevium, lawrencium, and seaborgium, as well as elements 114, 116, and 118. Most impressive about the research, is the measurement of a single atom of these transcurium elements. The discovery of these elements has shown that we can overcome extreme difficulties in the pursuit of chemical knowledge and our understanding of the universe. As impressive as this is, many citizens are not aware of these achievements because it is not publicized well.

Two events: one disastrous, the other impressive. As scientists and engineers, we need to remember and reflect on both events. However, due to humans’ natural tendency to dwell on the negative, I feel we are obligated to educate and communicate to the public about the positive achievements of the chemical enterprise.

Ea Warren



Kids and Chemistry

We would like to revitalize our Kids and Chemistry Program. The program is supported by ACS national as well as the local section, and provides training to volunteers for outreach programs and hands-on experiments with kids in the age group 9-12 years. The program is now geared to complement elementary school curricula. We’d like to have coordinators for the program and potentially a newsletter for volunteers to share suggestions and help organize activities in the Santa Clara Valley Section. If you have been involved previously and would like to participate, or if you think you might like to get involved with this great program, please send your name, contact address, and any suggestions to bonnie.charpentier@roche.com.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS Ottenberg Service Award 2000

It is time again to nominate candidates for the Abraham Ottenberg Service Award of the Santa Clara Valley Section. This Award was established in 1973 by the Santa Clara Valley Section to recognize members who have rendered outstanding service to the Section. It is named after Abraham Ottenberg, a former member who devoted much of himself to service to the Section. The award consists of an engraved plaque and a check for two hundred dollars. The award recipient is selected from candidates nominated by members of the Section. Nominees must be members or affiliates of the Santa Clara Valley Section.

Previous recipients are: Shirley B. Radding (1974), Oliver F. Senn (1975), Floyd M. Hobbs (1976), Frank R. Mayo (1977), Harry S. Mosher (1978), Lois J. Durham (1979), Richard W. Gaver (1980), Alan C. Ling (1982), Ludwig A. Mayer (1983), John F. Riley (1983), Howard M. Peters (1984), June G. Jones (1986), Robert L. Montoya (1986), Malcolm Dole (1987), Donald E. Green (1991), Hubert E. Dubb (1992), Karl Marhenke (1993), Stephen N. Senzer (1994), Carol W. Mosher (1995), Bonnie Charpentier (1998), and Linda Brunauer (1999). (No award in 1981, '85, '88, '89, '90, '96, or '97).

The nominating letter should include a brief biography of the candidate and a description or evaluation of the service(s) to be recognized by the award. Seconding nominations are not required but will be accepted.

Nominations should be sent to:

Chairman, Ottenberg Award Committee
Santa Clara Valley Section, ACS
Post Office Box 395
Palo Alto, CA 94302

Nominations must be received by May 15, 2000 to be considered for the 2000 award.

Editor's Corner

Thanks to all of you that stopped by to see me at the ACS show. It was nice to see so many people. In other news we have revamped the "Bay Area Science Calendar". It is accessible from the www.scvacs.org web site under "Links to items of local interests" or can be reached directly at www.SuperCalendar.com/view.php3?a=813. We will now be listing events from more local science groups. In addition, one now has the option of signing up with SuperCalendar.com. If you do so you will receive e-mail notifications from groups that you select. For a list of groups, look under the Northern California "Professional Organizations" section. Notifications will typically be sent 7 and 21 days

before an event. Current groups include: American Institute of Physics (West Coast), California Separation Science Society (CaSSS), Corporate Science Events, Golden Gate Polymer Forum, MTBE/OXY Committee, San Francisco Bay Area Mass Spectrometry (BAMS), and, of course, Santa Clara Valley ACS.

If you have a group that would like to be listed on the calendar please send me e-mail at colby@sisweb.com. Please note that commercial use will be strongly discouraged.



EMPLOYMENT HELP IN OTHER AREAS OF CALIFORNIA

The following are names and addresses of contacts in other California Sections. You may write to them or call to find out how to receive their job listings or how to place a job listing with them. Do not send self-addressed envelopes unless requested to do so.

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Southern California Section

Send a self-addressed, 55 cent stamped business envelope to:
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FUTURE MEETINGS

Apr 26	SCV Dinner Meeting <i>Dr. Carl Djerassi</i>
May 20	Illustrating Nature Exhibit UCSC, Santa Cruz

For the latest information, please visit the
SCV ACS Web Site: www.scvacs.org

CHEMPLOYMENT ABSTRACTS

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