Professor Alfred Hassner z”l

1930-2024

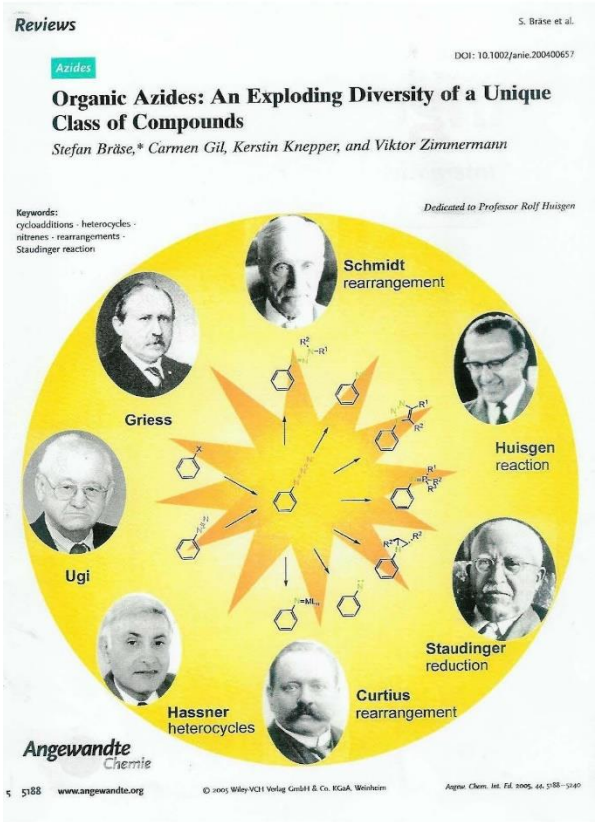
Professor Alfred Hassner was born in 1930 in Czernowitz, Romania (now part of Ukraine). His education was disrupted by World War II, but despite only completing the third grade before the war, he displayed remarkable resilience and determination. Surviving the Holocaust, he embarked on an academic journey that would leave an indelible mark on the field of chemical sciences. Skipping grades 4 through 12, Hassner enrolled directly at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna (1949-1951) before moving to the University of Nebraska, where he completed his BSc in 1952. Under the guidance of Norman Cromwell, he continued his graduate studies at Nebraska, obtaining his PhD in 1956. Furthering his academic pursuits, he pursued post-doctoral training under Louis Fieser at Harvard from 1956 to 1957. Hassner's academic career flourished, beginning in 1957 at the University of Colorado in Boulder where he was appointed Full Professor in 1966, a position he held until 1975 when he transitioned to the State University of New York at Binghamton, where he was honored with the title of Distinguished Professor. In 1983, he relocated to Bar-Ilan University in Ramat-Gan, Israel, where he established a vibrant research group and remained actively involved in teaching well into his nineties.

After his arrival in Israel, Professor Hassner served the Israel scientific community in many capacities, notably as President of the Israel Chemical Society (ICS) from 1991-1994. In recognition of his achievements, he received the ICS Prize of Excellence in 2007 and, in 2016, became an Honorable Member of the ICS for his long scientific leadership in synthetic organic chemistry and his significant contributions to higher education in Israel.

Hassner's contributions to chemical sciences are vast and enduring, particularly in the field of synthetic methodology, the synthesis of small rings, and heterocyclic chemistry. His pioneering work includes the stereoselective introduction of nitrogen functionalities into organic molecules, the synthesis of

steroid heterocycles, and other biologically active compounds. Notably, he was among the first to advocate for the application of NMR half-widths in stereochemical structure assignments, a concept that predates the advent of high-resolution NMR spectroscopy. Many fundamental reagents and concepts in organic synthesis bear his name, including the widely-used principles of regiochemistry and regioselectivity.

Hassner's contributions to the field were recognized with numerous accolades, including the von Humboldt Award, Fulbright Senior Award, Lady Davis Foundation Award, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Award, U.S. National Research Council Award, and the A.W. Killam Award. He was also named a Fellow of The Royal Society of Chemistry. In addition to his scholarly achievements, Hassner served on the Editorial Boards of esteemed journals such as the Journal of Organic Chemistry, Organic Preparations and Procedures International, and Heterocyclic Communications. He played a pivotal role in organizing numerous international conferences and was honored to be featured alongside other distinguished organic chemists on the cover of Angewandte Chemie in 2005, recognizing his leadership in heterocyclic chemistry.



Throughout his illustrious career, Professor Hassner mentored over 50 graduate students and more than 60 postdoctoral scholars. His scholarly output was equally impressive, comprising over 300 research articles and 13 books and monographs. Among his most celebrated works is the third edition of "Organic Syntheses Based on Name Reactions: A Practical Guide to Over 800 Transformations" (Elsevier, 2012), which garnered widespread acclaim and featured a foreword by esteemed organic chemists Samuel Danishefsky and Dieter Seebach.

Professor Hassner was the proud father of two children, and grandchildren and great grandchildren. His daughter, Dr. Lilly Glazer holds a PhD in molecular genetics and his son, Lawrence Hassner holds an M.Sc.in chemistry and an MBA in business management. Unfortunately, his beloved wife, Cyd, passed away in 2001 from Creutzfeldt-Jakobs disease, and the Hassner family has inaugurated an annual lecture at Bar-Ilan Chemistry Department in her memory. Despite suffering the tragic loss of family members in the Holocaust and losing three children to accidents and illness, the Hassner family has a wide circle of close friends both in Israel and abroad. As Lilly and Lawrence said during week of mourning, “Our friends are our family.”

More information:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Hassner

https://www.arkat-usa.org/get-file/18991/