

Jeffrey I. Seeman (1946-)



Jeffrey I. Seeman was born on May 25, 1946 in Jersey City, NJ. He graduated from the Stevens Institute of Technology in nearby Hoboken in 1967 with a degree in Chemistry with high honors. He then attended the University of California at Berkeley and obtained a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry in 1971. After an NIH Staff Fellowship at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD, Jeff joined the Philip Morris Research Center in 1973 in Richmond, Virginia, and worked for them until 1999. During that time, he published over 90 papers and patents in fields as diverse as natural products and tobacco chemistry, chemical physics, flavor technology, and the history of chemistry. For the past 10 years, he has been at the University of Richmond.

In 1983, Jeff spent a sabbatical year at Oxford University as a Visiting Professor. Not only did he complete a major review article for *Chemical Reviews*, he started to fall in love with the history of organic chemistry. Upon his return he proposed to ACS Books a series of autobiographies of eminent chemists and supervised the production and edited 20 of these volumes, issued as the ACS Series: *Profiles, Pathways and Dreams*, from 1990-1997. Upon his retirement from Philip Morris, Jeff joined the Chemical Heritage Foundation as a visiting Senior Fellow in 1999. He has had a major impact on the success of this institution and served as the Chair of its Heritage Council from 2008-2014. He also served on CHF's Board of Directors during this period.

Another organization that has benefitted from Jeff's leadership is the Division of the History of Chemistry of the American Chemical Society (HIST). He served as Chair during 2005-2006. During this period he created a HIST award program that

recognizes historically important publications in chemistry, the Citation for Chemical Breakthrough (CCB) Award program. He has successfully managed this program which has awarded 57 plaques to institutions around the world. The CCB Award program is associated with the History of Chemistry Division of the American Chemical Society and is recognized as an important part of the worldwide community of the history of chemistry.

Jeff has organized or co-organized many HIST symposia in the last 20 years. A few of these include: “Pharmaceutical Research and Development over the Past 25 Years: Investment in Basic Research Leading to Benefits for Society” (2006), “HIST at 85: Looking Back and Looking Ahead” (2007), “Citation for Chemical Breakthroughs” (2008), “The Heritage of Chemistry: A Symposium in Honor of Arnold Thackray” (2009), “Fifty Years of the James Flack Norris Award: The Foundations of Physical Organic Chemistry” (2014), and “A Salute to Ted Benfey at 90: Science, History, Culture and a Commitment to Humanism” (2016).

Jeff has established himself as the premier historian of modern organic chemistry. He is thoroughly familiar with the science and has established close relationships with many of the living and recently departed leaders in organic chemistry. He has been tapped to write biographies for many of them. For example, he was chosen by the National Academy of Sciences to write the Biographical Memoir for Ernest L. Eliel (2014). He understands the subtleties of organic synthesis and can comment with authority on disputes. For example: “The Woodward-Doering/Rabe-Kindler Total Synthesis of Quinine: Setting the Record Straight” *Angew. Chem.* **46**, 1378-1413 (2007). He is an example of what the right kind of chemist can bring to the history of modern chemistry: he can both understand the science and put the events into full historical and sociological perspective. Rather than operating as a singular actor in the world of the history of chemistry, Jeff has chosen to be highly interactive and to bring the full modern scientific community into the discussion as the primary customers for his research. If we can get the story right in real time, later historians will be able to present a much better epic narrative. In the past 10 years, he has published over 55 papers in the history and sociology of chemistry.

The Division of the History of Chemistry is pleased to award the **HIST Award for Outstanding Achievement in the History of Chemistry** for 2017 to Jeffrey I. Seeman.