

VERHULST, Joris

Born: 10 February 1906, Berchem (Antwerp)

Died: 21 December 1987, Leuven

He is one of the three children of an Antwerp diamond dealer of Brasschaat. After his secondary studies at the Berchem high school, he studies chemistry at the University of Leuven, starting in 1924 and obtaining his Ph.D. in 1930 with a doctoral thesis on butenols in molasses.

He obtains a grant from the National Fund for Scientific Research (NFWO) and prof. F.M. Jaeger becomes his mentor at the University of Groningen (Netherlands) during his study of the analysis of the structure of crystals. He is appointed lecturer in Leuven in 1932.

An Extensive and Varied Task

His first assignment consists of lecturing and being in charge of the lab of crystallography of the BA students of the faculty of sciences and applied sciences and of lecturing chemistry to the students of agricultural sciences and economy.

As student and professor he plays an important role in introducing the Flemish language in the chemical institute. He becomes professor in charge of the lectures and the lab of organic and inorganic chemistry in the MA-classes. When prof. Van Buggenhout retires in 1946, Joris is appointed successor in the BA-classes of medicine, sciences and applied sciences. His extensive task consists of 25 hours of lecturing per semester and examining yearly in June roughly 1000 students.

It may be said that he has initiated generations of doctors, engineers, pharmacists, teachers, biologists, geologists and chemists from all parts of Flanders into the finer points of chemistry.

With the professors Albert Bruylants and Jean-Charles Jungers he is co-author of an extensive handbook of general (1954), inorganic (1953) and organic (1958) chemistry.

From 1970 (the year of the scission of the University of Leuven in two independent universities: the KU Leuven and the Université Catholique de Louvain) till he retires in 1974, he becomes the respected dean of the department of chemistry, that he manages in an unselfish way and with willingness to dialogue.

Valuable scientific Research

During his researches into organic chemistry he shows a preference for the Friedel-Crafts reactions: treating aromatic compounds with alkylating or acylating reagents. The resulting products of this type of electrophile aromatic substitutions lead to new chemical compounds with a range of new applications.

He is also interested in the way how Lewis acids function as catalysts.

He is the mentor of some 40 Ph.D. treatises and member of numerous scientific committees.

A just and honest Person

Many of his students remember professor Verhulst as an excellent teacher, a strict, severe and just examiner, an unpretentious and steady colleague, a stimulating and understanding head of department

As a devotee to the arts of music he plays the cello in the Leuven Universitair Orchestra.

He carries the title of Grand Officer of the Order of Leopold II

He was married to Mrs. Hilde Janssens and has 3 adorable children.

Paul Balduck - Transl. Yves De Cock
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