

## Henry Arnstein (12 June 1924 – 2 November 2020)



Professor Henry Arnstein was one of the world's eminent biological scientists and fathers of molecular biology, unravelling the fundamental biology of the cell which led to the revolution that is modern-day molecular genomic science.

Henry Rudolf Victor Arnstein was born in Vienna in 1924, the son of Dr Alfred and Hilde Arnstein. He left Austria with his brother, Hans, in May 1938 to live with friends in London, his parents joining later that year. He graduated with a BSc in organic chemistry from Imperial College in 1944 and was awarded his PhD and Diploma of Imperial College in 1947.

From 1947 to 1948 he was a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Rochester, New York, and had many adventures in the USA driving across the country and visiting famous landmarks, including Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon. In 1948, Henry started work at the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) in Hampstead and in 1950 he moved to the NIMR in Mill Hill.

He married Ruth Heumann, a librarian at NIMR, in 1951 and their sons Michael and Christopher were born in 1955 and 1959, respectively.

His preceding research interests came together in the early 1960s, together with his collaboration with Bob Cox, to mark a new direction that was going to last his lifetime: protein biosynthesis. He would later write a book with Bob titled *Protein Synthesis* (OUP 1992). In 1961 he was awarded the DSc from the University of London for his work on amino acid metabolism and the biosynthesis of antibiotics.

Henry moved from Mill Hill in 1965 to take up the Chair of Biochemistry at King's College London (KCL), where his research initially focused on the mechanism of initiation of protein synthesis and the production of active ribosomal subunits and messenger ribonucleoprotein complexes from mammalian sources. Later, in the 1970s and into the 1980s, he continued his investigation of the control of protein synthesis by various stress factors.

As well as running the department, he was active in college administration as a member of the Council and Dean of the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences. He was also heavily involved in the merging of the Biochemistry Departments of three colleges of the University of London in the late 1980s (KCL, Chelsea and Queen Elizabeth), which led to the redesign of courses and the reallocation of staff, teaching rooms and labs on three campuses! He retired from KCL in 1988.

He supervised and mentored over 25 PhD students, as well as post-doctoral fellows, and it is evident that for 25 years his lab at KCL was a hive of activity, welcoming scientists from across the world. Together with his

colleagues and students, he published over 150 scientific papers during his time at KCL.

Henry was very supportive of the members of his lab and patient when results were slow in coming! He held weekly progress meetings in his office, where problems were aired and ideas were exchanged, with talks sometimes continuing in the pub after the Friday Departmental seminars. The training people received in his lab was, for many, the springboard to an academic career, with at least four becoming professors in their own right and others becoming senior research scientists in academia or industry.

Other roles he fulfilled during his outstanding career included Honorary Secretary of the Biochemical Society from 1962 to 1967 and Chairman of the Professional and Educational Sub-Committee from 1981 to 1984. He was very well respected internationally, was staunchly European and was Secretary General of the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS) for 6 years from 1968, also being awarded the FEBS Diplôme d'Honneur in 1974. He served on a number of editorial boards, including *Folia Biologica* and *FEBS Letters*. Ruth assisted him with the proof reading.

His many awards included being made a Fellow of KCL in 1979 and an Honorary Member of the Biochemical Society in 1988. He was also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology.

He enjoyed a variety of sports, including target rifle shooting for which he was awarded his Imperial College colours. His real love was for skiing and the mountains, and he would take his sons on holiday to Austria and France. He skied to the age of 73 and was upset at never quite qualifying for a free ski pass! Summer holidays were generally spent in Devon with relatives or connected to various FEBS conferences.

Following his career at KCL, he volunteered with the Metropolitan Police, his local Neighbourhood Watch as well as a local charity shop. He spent a lot of time and energy caring for Ruth before she passed away from dementia in 2015 and would always talk about their life together.

He is survived by his sons, five grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

Professor Henry Arnstein, biochemist, was born on 12 June 1924. He died peacefully on 2 November 2020 aged 96.

I am indebted to Drs Sophia Bonanou, Bob Cox, Peter Nunn, Bill Whelan and other colleagues for assistance with my father's obituary.

**Michael J. A. Arnstein**