



## FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORGANIC GEOCHEMISTRY DIVISION



Keith A. Kvenvolden

The hybrid scientific discipline called organic geochemistry evolved during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the core sciences of organic chemistry and geology, when practitioners in these two disparate fields realized that detailed information on the organic materials in sediments and rocks was of both fundamental and applied interest and importance. It has been suggested that 1930 marked the beginning of organic geochemistry (Kvenvolden 2008). In a seminal paper, Alfred Treibs (1936) demonstrated the power and elegance of

the organic geochemical approach by describing free-base and metal-complexed porphyrins in shale, oil, and coal, and by showing the important link between these compounds and their biochemical precursors found in living systems.

For thirty years organic geochemical principles were applied mainly to geological problems in the petroleum field (reviewed by Hunt et al. 2002), and most practitioners at the time were associated with the petroleum industry. In 1959, however, a meeting entitled "General Petroleum Geochemistry Symposium" was held at Fordham University in New York City, in conjunction with the 5<sup>th</sup> World Petroleum Congress. An academic sponsor of the symposium was a Fordham faculty member named Bart Nagy. Professor Nagy had a strong interest in petroleum geochemistry (see Nagy and Colombo 1967), but he also recognized the need to formally organize organic geochemistry so that workers outside the petroleum industry could be made aware of the potential of this new scientific discipline.

Thus in 1959, besides organizing a symposium, Nagy also worked with the Geochemical Society to establish an Organic Geochemistry Division (OGD), which was formally recognized in 1960 when the division participated in the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America (GSA) in Denver, Colorado. The relationship between OGD and the Geochemical Society continues to the present. To date (2010), forty individuals have served as chairperson. The names of officers of the OGD, since its inception, are listed in the table.

During the past fifty years, the OGD has intermittently sponsored sessions and symposia, commonly at GSA annual meetings, devoted to various aspects of organic geochemistry. In addition, since 1979, the OGD has been active in selecting winners of the Treibs Award for outstanding contributions to organic geochemistry. The first and only honorary recipient was Alfred Treibs. Twenty-four designated awardees have received this honor since 1979.

The year 2010 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of OGD. During the past 50 years, the field of organic geochemistry has evolved into a widely recognized geoscience. It has contributed significantly not only to geology (petroleum formation and occurrence, hydrothermal processes, molecular [amino] stratigraphy, global emissions [seepages] of oil and gas), and biology (biogeochemistry, ecology, microbial processes) but also to other disciplines, such as atmospheric and environmental sciences, soil science, chemical and paleoceanography, hydrology, natural products chemistry, archaeology, and cosmochemistry.

**TABLE 1** OGD OFFICERS 1960–2010

| Term      | Chairperson    | Secretary     |
|-----------|----------------|---------------|
| 1959–1960 | B. Nagy        | E.G. Baker    |
| 1960–1961 | H. Smith       | I. Breger     |
| 1961–1962 | P. Witherspoon |               |
| 1962–1963 | J. Hunt        | J. Vallentyne |
| 1963–1964 | R. Siever      |               |
| 1964–1965 | I. Breger      | W. Meinschein |
| 1965–1966 | G. Erdman      |               |
| 1966–1967 | R. Bader       | E. Hare       |
| 1967–1968 | J. Vallentyne  |               |
| 1968–1969 | W. Meinschein  | E. Bray       |
| 1969–1970 | D. Spencer     |               |
| 1970–1971 | K. Kvenvolden  | V. Swanson    |
| 1971–1972 | R. Mclver      |               |
| 1972–1973 | P. Given       | R. Mitterer   |
| 1973–1974 | W. Robinson    |               |
| 1974–1975 | S. Silverman   | Sr. M. Murphy |
| 1975–1976 | W. Sackett     |               |
| 1976–1977 | I. Kaplan      | C. Lee        |
| 1977–1978 | W. Orr         |               |
| 1978–1979 | C. Barker      | S. Palmer     |
| 1979–1980 | J. Palacas     |               |
| 1980–1981 | J. Winters     | J. Whelan     |
| 1981–1982 | T. Hoering     |               |
| 1982–1983 | R. Mitterer    | S. Macko      |
| 1983–1984 | G. Claypool    |               |
| 1984–1985 | J. Zumberge    | S. Macko      |
| 1985–1986 | R. Gagosian    |               |
| 1986–1987 | M. Schoell     | P. Ostrom     |
| 1987–1988 | J. Hayes       |               |
| 1988–1989 |                | T. Dickneider |
| 1989–1991 | P. Meyers      |               |
| 1991–1993 | C. Lee         | J. Werne      |
| 1993–1995 | J. Curiale     |               |
| 1995–1997 | J. Hedges      |               |
| 1997–1999 | M. Lewan       |               |
| 1999–2001 | M. Engel       |               |
| 2001–2003 | K. Peters      |               |
| 2003–2005 | M. Whiticar    |               |
| 2005–2007 | M. McCaffrey   |               |
| 2007–2009 | R. Harvey      |               |
| 2009–2011 | E. Canuel      |               |

### REFERENCES

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- Treibs AE (1936) Chlorophyll- und Hämin-derivate in organischen Mineralstoffen. *Angewante Chemie* 49: 682-688

**Keith A. Kvenvolden**, Emeritus  
U.S. Geological Survey

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Online elections for the future GS treasurer and secretary positions will be held in November. Visit our website to view the slate of candidates.

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The Geochemical Society's Geochemical Career Center is a web-based service open to the entire geochemical community, offering an easy-to-use and highly targeted resource for online employment connections.

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**GS Events at GSA-Denver**

For those attending the GSA meeting, be sure to stop at **Booth 921** to renew your GS membership and pick up a fantastic GS lapel pin (free while supplies last)!

The **GS Joint Reception** with the MSA and the GSA's new MGPV Division will be on Tuesday, November 2, 2010, from 5:45 to 7:45 pm). Tickets are \$10 for professionals and \$5 for students and may be purchased at the door (be sure to wear your fantastic GS lapel pin!).

And finally, take in Patricia Dove's **F. Earl Ingerson Lecture** titled "Deciphering Carbonates through the Lens of Multiple Pathways to Mineral Formation," at 8:00 am on Wednesday, November 3.

Thank you to Troy Rasbury and the rest of the 2010 Program Committee, as well as to everyone who volunteered to chair our geochemical sessions.

**2010 OGD Best Paper Award**

The Organic Geochemistry Division of the Geochemical Society announced in July 2010 that Alon Amrani, Alex Sessions, and Jess Adkins were the recipients of the 2010 Best Paper Award for their paper "Compound-Specific  $^{34}\text{S}$  Analysis of Volatile Organics by Coupled GC/Multicollector-ICPMS," published in 2009 (Analytical Chemistry 81: 9027-9034). The award will be presented during the International Meeting of Organic Geochemistry in 2011 (IMOG 2011).

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 Earth and Planetary Sciences, CB 1169  
 One Brookings Drive  
 Saint Louis, MO 63130-4899, USA  
 E-mail: [gsoffice@geochemsoc.org](mailto:gsoffice@geochemsoc.org)  
 Phone: 314-935-4131  
 Fax: 314-935-4121  
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