

Alfred Bader Fonds

Chemistry and Art
More Adventures of a Chemist Collector

Chapter 14 -
My Eightieth Birthday

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Chapter 14

My Eightieth Birthday

Home

The date 28 April 2004 was a special day, my eightieth birthday, and as busy as could be. I knew that David would be coming in from Pennsylvania and Charles Munch from his home near Madison, so I wanted to get as much work done as possible before they arrived.

Despite many phone calls and e-mails that required my attention, I couldn't help thinking of 28 April in years past. I have often wondered what my parents' lives were like before I was born. Were they overjoyed at the prospect of a second child? Was my father concerned at this addition to his family? He was not a reliable provider, addicted to gambling; was he aware that his financial position was very precarious? Did Mama, my biological mother, have any inkling of this? Were they delighted to have a son? Within two weeks, my father was dead, the cause of death unclear, suicide or murder. I shall always wonder about this.

On what was to be my last birthday in Vienna, in 1938, Muttli, my mother by adoption, gave me a slip of paper, a promissory note for a trip up the Danube. I knew at the time that the intent was good, but it would be impossible because we had no money, and life was so precarious because the Nazis had marched in the month before. I couldn't know that within seven months, I would be leaving Vienna on the first Kindertransport.

By my sixteenth birthday, a Sunday in 1940, the war had begun. No one in Hove, England, where I was living remembered that it was my birthday. It was a sad day, but on Monday, a letter came from Muttli wishing me a very happy birthday, always

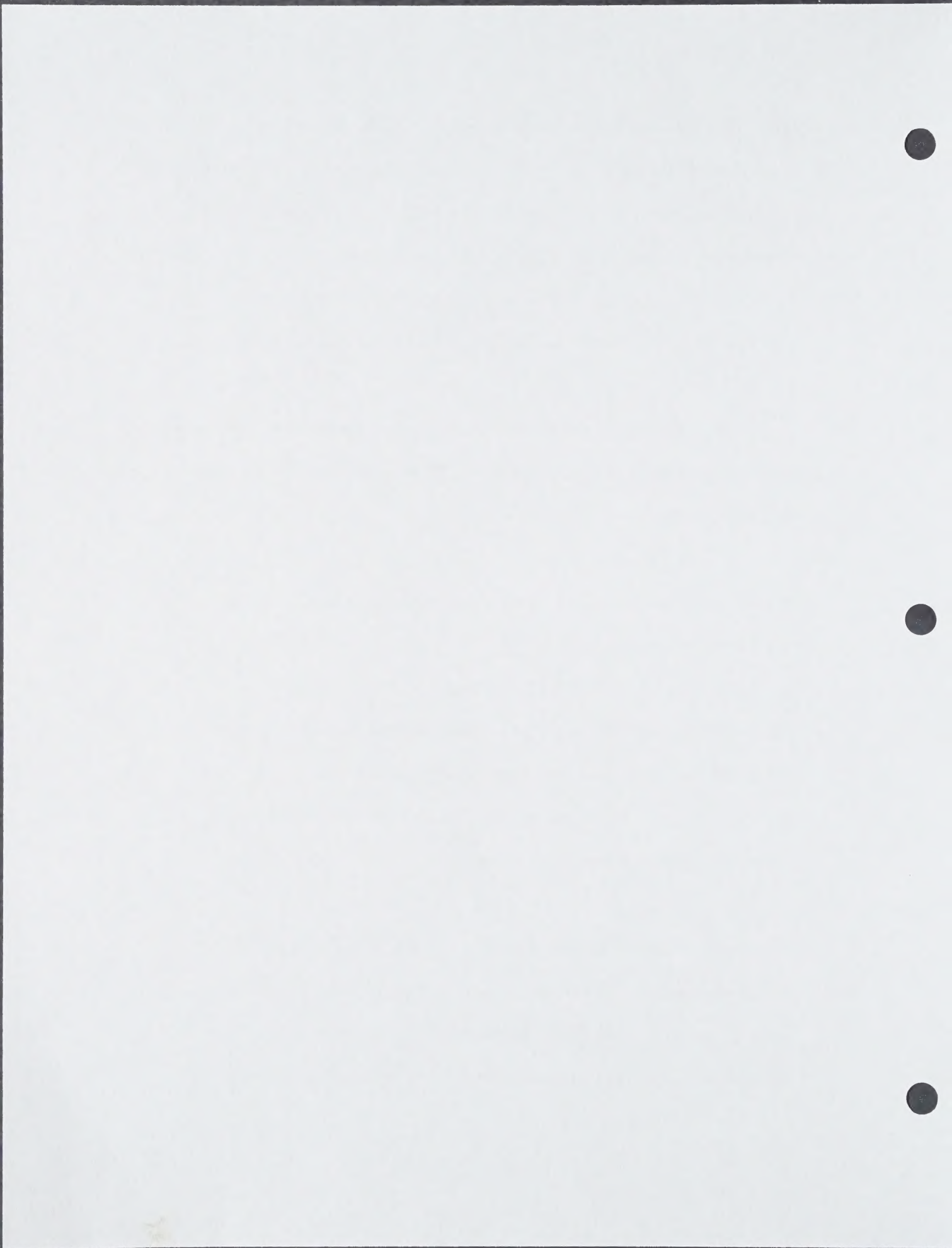


concerned for me, always worrying about my health. I was so pleased to have her letter. Within days, Holland and Belgium fell, Britain expected an invasion; within two weeks, I was arrested as an enemy alien, interned, then shipped to Canada as a prisoner of war. My next birthday was spent in the internment camp on an island in Quebec, Canada. How long would I be kept there? That was the question we all asked ourselves, but at least we were safe from the Nazis, and by April 1941, conditions were very much easier than on our arrival.

Certainly my seventeenth birthday was a happier day than the lonely Sunday in England. I kept a diary in German of our lives in the camp and made the following notation for April 28:

28.4.41, Seventeen. When I compare my last birthday with this and consider what happened in this last year, I ask myself "was the last year a lost year or not?" Materially, certainly, mentally, certainly not. In free life I could never have had these experiences, and what is much more important, is not a true friend, a friend you can really trust worth much more than material gain? And now, should I pass the matriculation exam in June, I will certainly not look back to my sixteenth year as a wasted year.

It is customary on one's birthday to make resolutions, and some years I set goals which seemed hopeless from the start; this time, however, I know that I will reach my goal: I will try to bring myself mentally, morally and physically to the level of Pong [my best friend in camp].



My birthday passed well. The weather was and still is beautiful, and many of my friends had given me small presents. Bobby, Max, Arno, Heinz, Walter, and Bruno [the Canadian sergeant] were among the first - my box is full of oranges, apples, coconuts, chocolates and cookies! Rudi gave me an Agatha Christie, chocolates and cookies. My greatest pleasure came from Muttli's and Pong's letters received yesterday and Pong's book. The day is coming to an end, may my seventeenth year see the world at peace, and me in freedom, united with Muttli and Pong.

Heinrich (Pong) Wohlaüer, my best friend in camp who had returned to England, had written in English: "... and I shall think of the lone island in a river in Canada, where my friends are, and just are celebrating the birthday of one of them, the one whom I liked most of them. Alfred, become a good and honest man! There are so few about now and the world is in need of them!"

My hopes for freedom came true six months and four days later, so that on my eighteenth birthday, I was a free man, although I had to report each week to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I had been taken into the heart of the wonderful family of Martin Wolff in Montreal, and I was enrolled in Queen's University, where I had been welcomed and helped in every way. I was working hard and knew that my life lay before me.

So for the next many years, birthdays are a blur until my seventieth and seventy-fifth, when we had wonderfully happy celebrations with family and



friends, some of the best of whom are no longer with us. Marvin Klitsner has died since, as has Bill Schield, the best stockbroker I have ever known. He and his wife died in a tragic car accident while vacationing in Spain.

I am blessed to have reached my eightieth birthday and to have so many friends who have sent greetings from around the world. Among the most memorable were an e-mail from Yechiel Bar-Chaim and a card from Margarete Harvey, David Harvey's wife.

Yechiel's e-mail read in part:

Your generosity has changed the way I work and liberated certain instincts from within that perhaps were there before well-hidden and perhaps not. I can say that as a result in communities like Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo there are now Jewish activists involved in helping others - inside and outside the community - in ways we wouldn't have imagined just a few short years ago.

At least as important to me, however, have been the new friends and contacts to whom you have introduced me in London, Prague, and Brno. Looking forward to our dinners in Prague scheduled in June with some of the best of them.

When I got home from the gallery, there was a beautiful orchid from Margarete Harvey and a card that read:

Dear Alfred,



Congratulations on this very special day! I wish you - and Isabel of course - good health and many happy returns of the day.

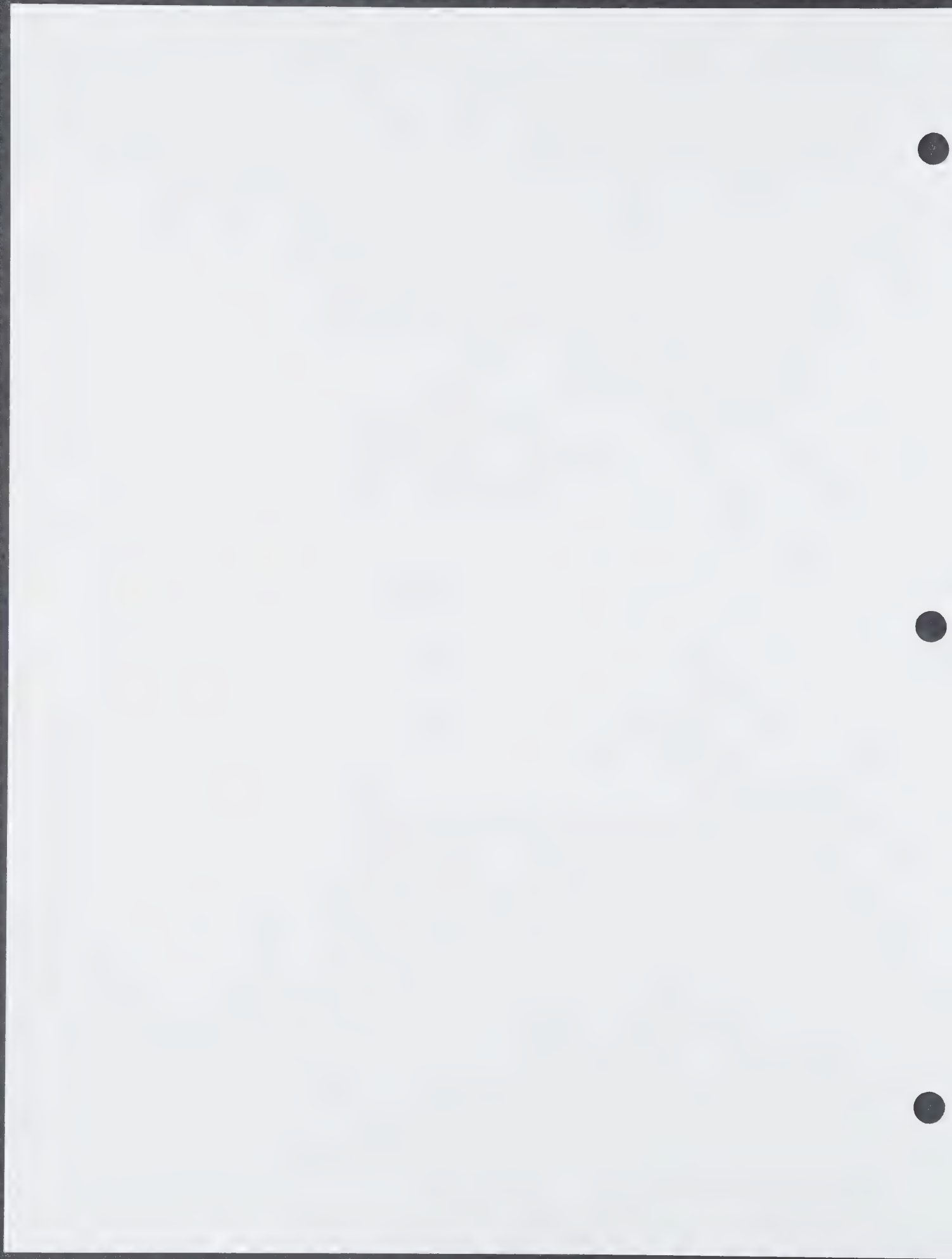
While I am thinking of all your achievements, I want to thank you for having brought our entire family over the Atlantic to Milwaukee. You may have mixed feelings on that subject, but I for one am very grateful for it.

So thank you again and many successful years of hunting, finding and selling (and uniting) those extraordinary works of art that we all love.

Fondly, Margarete (and David)

As I walked into the living room, I saw that my good friend Otto Naumann had filled our house with eighty tulips in eight vases, an unforgettable sight! Charles Munch brought me a beautiful sketch painted by his partner, Jane, a sketch that will join the two that Charles and Jane gave me for my seventieth and seventy-fifth birthdays. David and Daniel gave us a beautiful flat-view television set for our living room, which will allow us to see all sorts of programs much more clearly. Ann Zuehlke, my very helpful gallery manager, gave me a back massager to ease the occasional discomfort I get in my lower back and a large jar full of cookies to add to my weight.

Isabel and I had intended to have a quiet evening at home, but David would not hear of it, so he and Daniel had invited us instead for a quiet dinner in a secluded room at the University Club with Linda and her parents, our dear friend Lucy Cohn, Charles



Munch, Ann Zuehlke, and Michael Hatcher, our bookseller friend. It was so good to be with family and friends. By the time we came home shortly before 10 o'clock, I was dead tired, happy with my first day as an octogenarian.

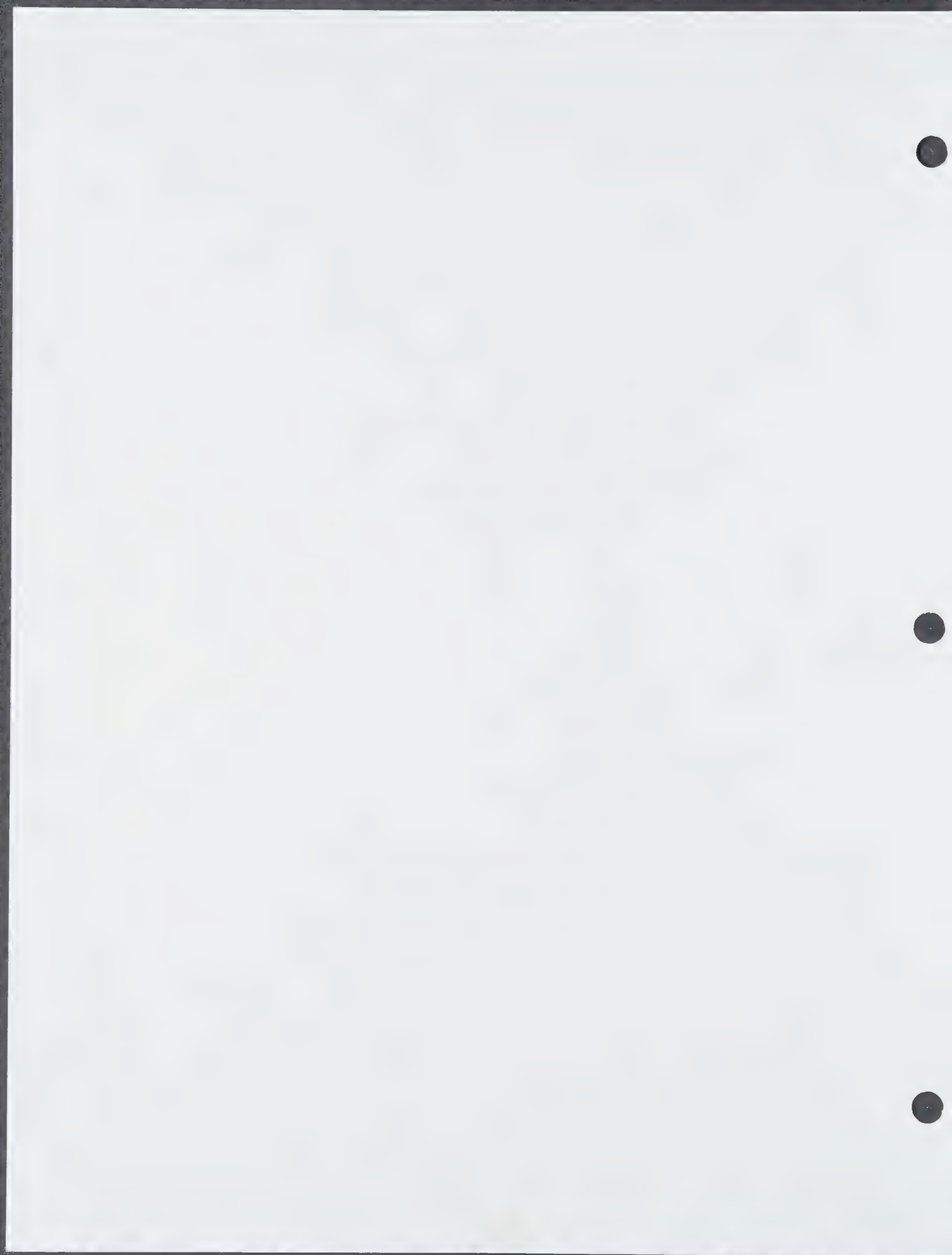
The celebrations have continued.

On Monday evening, 3 May, there was another birthday dinner at the home of friends Joe and Audrey Bernstein at which Rabbi Israel Shmotkin and his family presented me with an extraordinary map portraying my journeys in life. The Bernsteins and Rabbi Mendel Shmotkin, a charismatic Lubavitch rabbi, have become our close friends in recent years, and Joe and I have been working together both charitably and in business. This was a very different and very special party.

Queen's

12 May and 13 May 2004 were among the most memorable days of my life. Principal Leggett, the Art Centre, and the Art History and Chemistry Departments at Queen's had invited Isabel, Daniel, and me to a gala celebration, continuing my eightieth birthday festivities. Those who know me will understand why.

Sixty-four years earlier, on 12 May 1940, I had been picked up at the religious school of Middle Street Synagogue in Brighton to be interned for the next sixteen months. At the time, I did not realize that my months as a prisoner of war would give me a wonderful education and lead to my being admitted to Queen's University on 15 November 1941. My connection to Queen's has been close ever since, particularly for the last thirty years.

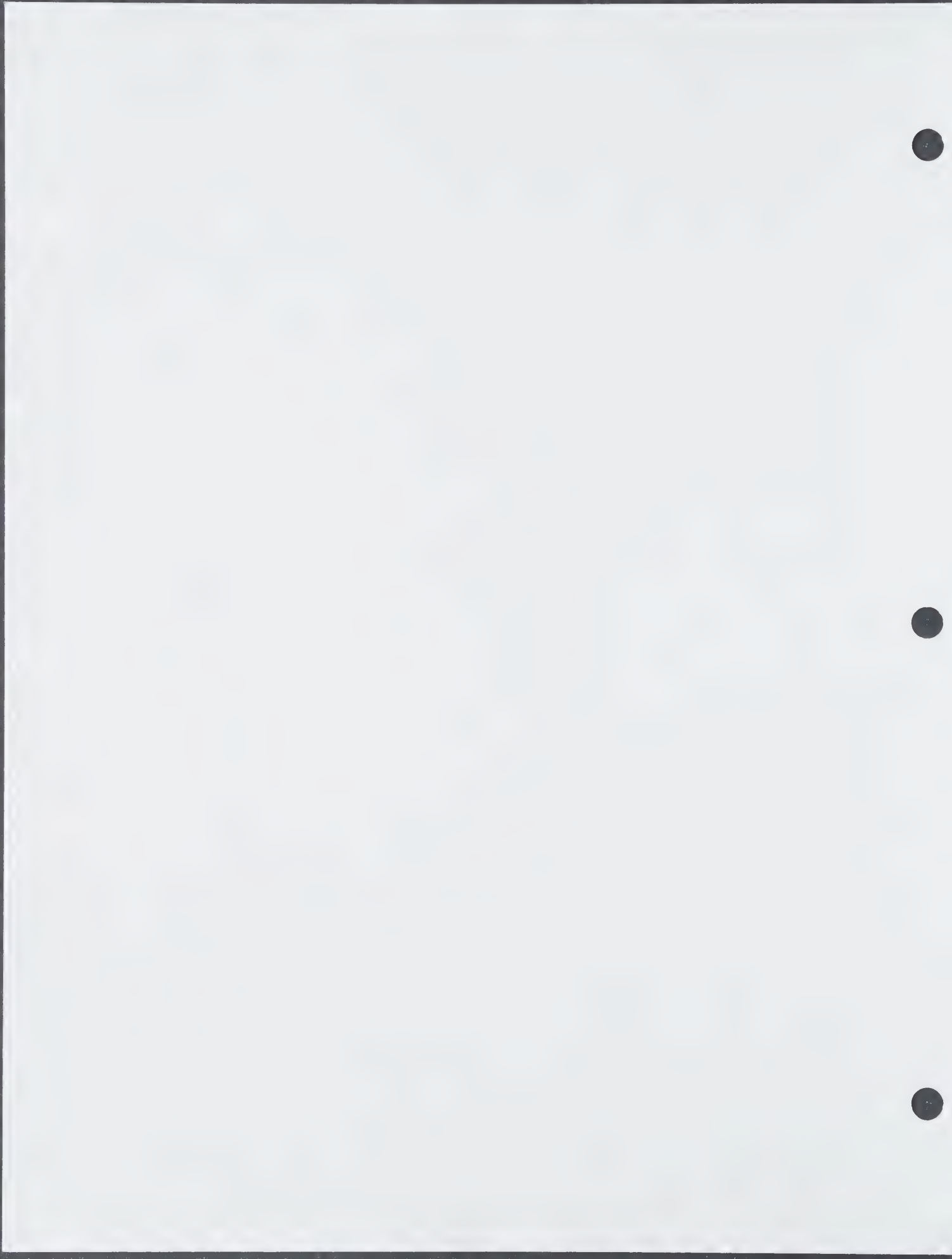


So it was that on this 12 May that Isabel, Charles Munch, and I joined Daniel to fly to Kingston. We were bringing the very fine Michael Sweerts *Self-Portrait* as my annual gift of a painting to Queen's.

Although Charles and his partner Jane Furchgott have conserved the majority of the old master paintings we have given to the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Charles had never been to Queen's before, but he had not been to Ottawa either, so he drove to the National Gallery there. Isabel went to Summerhill, where we were staying, to unpack, and I spent an hour with David de Witt, the Bader Curator at the Agnes, discussing various paintings.

At noon, we went to the first of the events prepared for the next two days, a luncheon at the new chemistry building where Victor Snieckus, the Bader Chair for Organic Chemistry, presented me with a truly moving compilation of greetings from more than fifty chemist friends around the world. Many of these - in Canada, in the United States, in Britain, France, and Switzerland - I had not heard from in years, and these greetings brought back such happy memories of our visits to them in their laboratories.

Then, between 1:30 and 5:00, there was a chemistry symposium with two lectures, followed by a reception. The first lecture, by our old friend the Nobel Laureate Barry Sharpless, was a lighthearted review of his travels and of his great chemical discoveries. The second, by one of my best chemist friends, Professor Gilbert Stork of Columbia University, dealt with his efforts over the years to look at various synthetic routes to morphine.



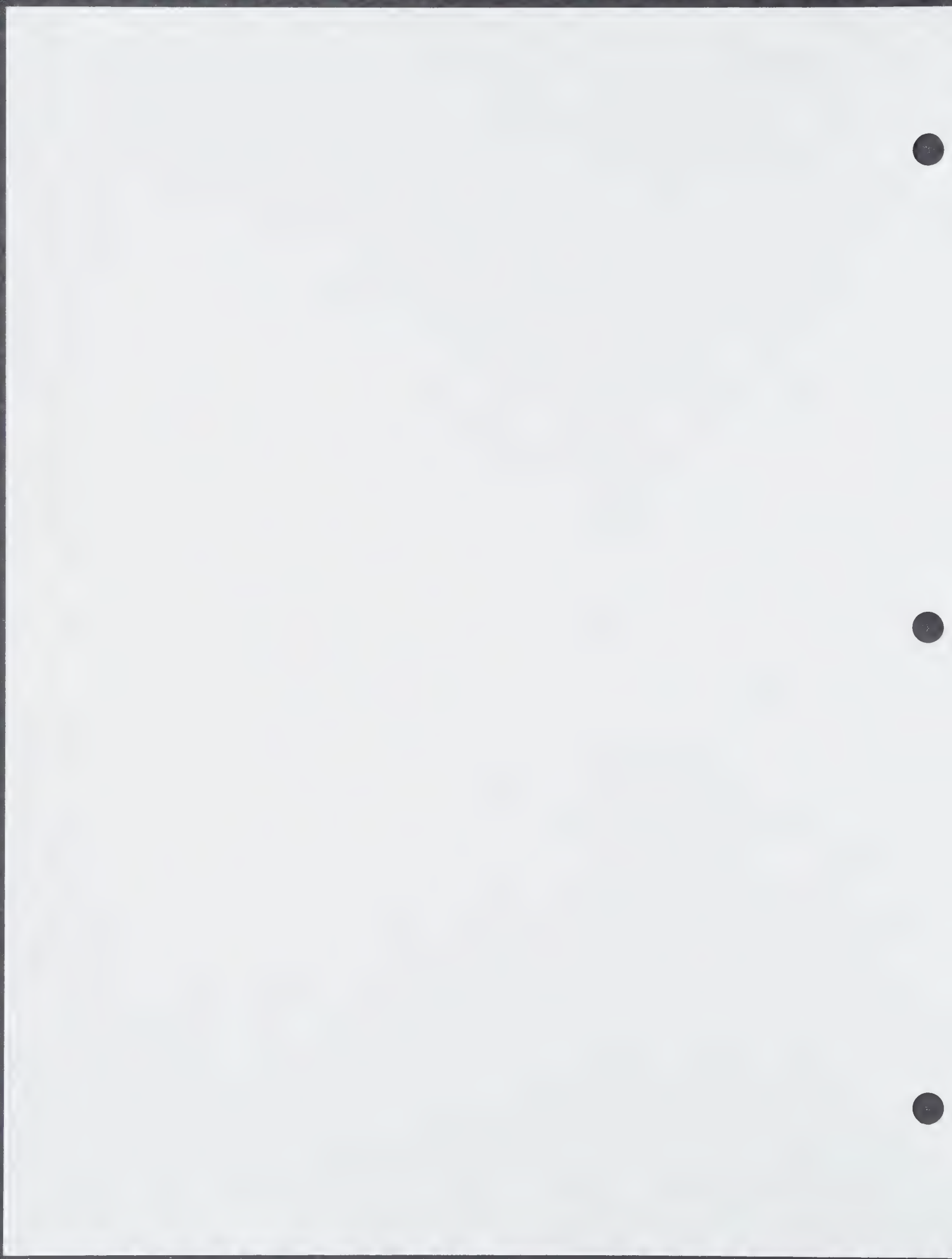
We were surprised but delighted to see Eva Kushner, the former president of Victoria University, who had come in from Toronto to bring us greetings from President Paul Gooch of Victoria University. She and Isabel went to the Bader Gallery in the Art Centre and then on to Summerhill to catch up on news, since Eva would be in Europe in June when we planned to be in Toronto for Isabel's fifty-fifth reunion.

After the reception, I went off to our room at Summerhill for a few minutes' rest while Isabel visited the costume store and the conservation department, where Sheilah Mackinnon is working on some of the Museum's costume collection. Before long, she was back and waking me to say that some friends were waiting to talk to me before the principal's dinner. To my amazement, there stood Volker Manuth, the previous Bader Chair in Northern Baroque Art, now in Nijmegen, Holland, and two of his former students; Axel Rüger, the Curator of the National Gallery in London; David de Witt; and my two sons, to present me with a Festschrift titled *Collected Opinions: Essays on Netherlandish Art In Honour of Alfred Bader.*^(fig.) Isabel, David, and Daniel had written the Forewords. I could hardly walk downstairs for the dinner because I was laughing so hard at what they had written about me. "As soon as we could speak intelligently - maybe by age five - our conversations with our father went something like this:

"You want to eat lunch. What for? We have to go look at that painting auction preview."

"Don't take a taxi - take the Tube."

At the moment of presentation, I was too weary to realize fully what a wonderful gift this was. Twenty-one art historians had written important art historical essays, some



dealing with paintings in my collection. One historian, Astrid Tümpel, had written two delightfully thought-provoking short stories. Charles Munch had drawn a sketch of me looking at a Rembrandt. The editors, Volker Manuth and Axel Rüger, must have worked incredibly hard to put this together. And four of the writers, Bill Robinson, Arthur Wheelock, David de Witt, and Martha Wolff, had visited us recently without any hint. What a conspiracy! It took me many hours, some while I could not sleep, really to understand what I had been given.

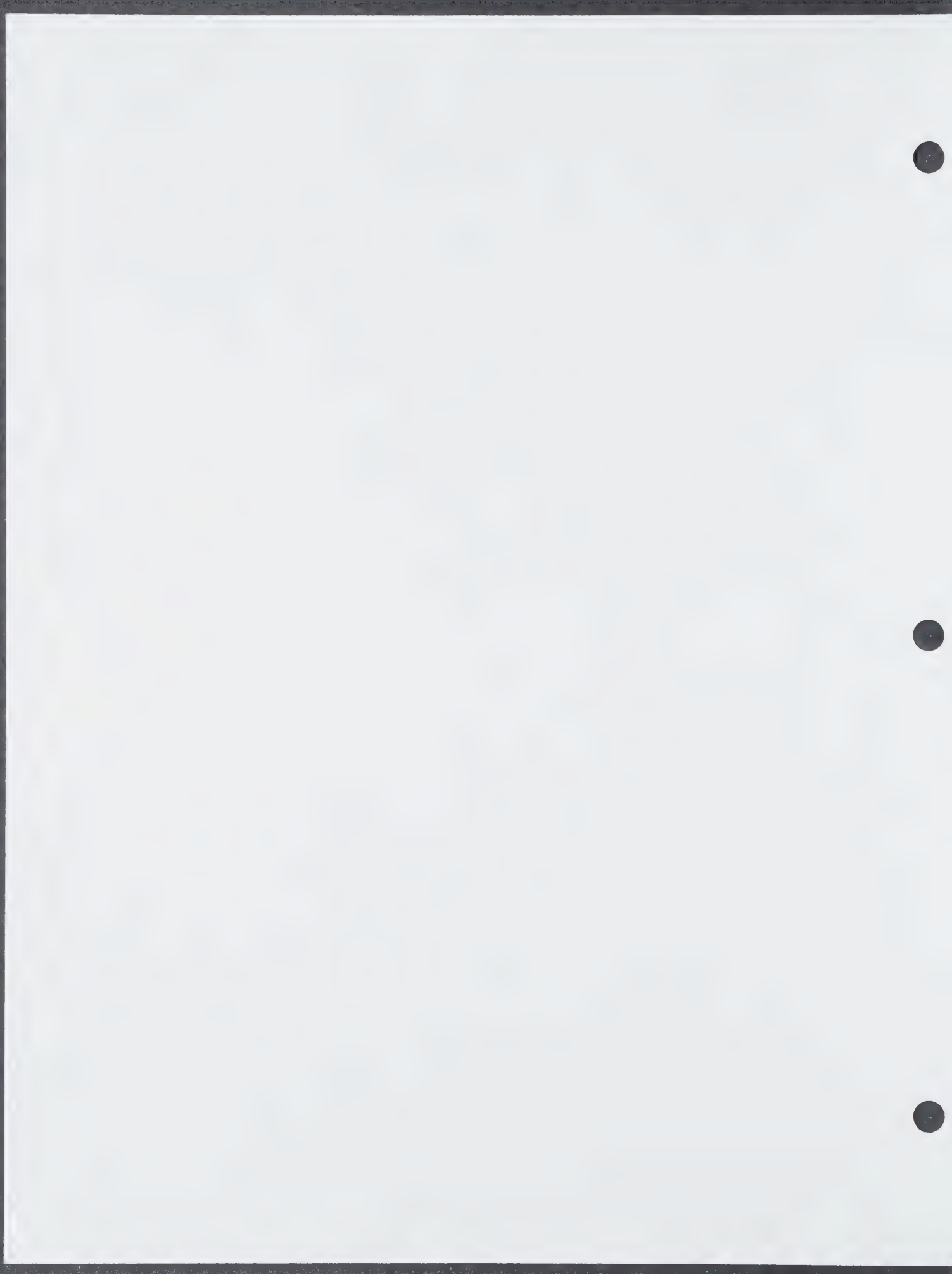
Downstairs there was a fine buffet hosted by Principal and Mrs. William Leggett who had invited Rosetta Elkin, Martin Wolff's daughter from Montreal (who had just turned ninety), and some of the many good friends we had made during our years at Queen's. The high point was the presentation of a plaque inscribed as follows:

Bader Lane

In Victoria's reign she was *Alice Street*, a gently curving passage through residential estates at Kingston's rough-hewn edge. While John Macdonald crafted a country and the town grew, more homes populated Alice's pastoral greens. So would the limestone halls of Queen's University, born years earlier by Royal Charter. Alice, appropriately, assumed the name of her academic neighbour. In time Queen's Crescent would accommodate Gray House, built at the dawn of the new century by a philosophy professor's nephew, and Ban Righ, cornerstone of a future women's residence, erected in 1923.

Seventeen years hence, propelled over an ocean by the winds of a European war, a young *Alfred Bader* found landfall and open arms at Queen's. Mentors and friends there offered a grounding in chemistry, history and humanity; the student, in turn, excelled. And so it began: a globally renowned career in chemistry, a passion for fine art and a borderless philanthropic quest to advance chemical knowledge and the preservation of beauty on canvas.

Life is a busy and unpredictable thoroughfare. Mind, toil and molecules spawn a fortune; art, and Isabel, inspire it. Queen's welcomes a youth; the adult enriches Queen's with Old Masters and its students with generations of opportunity.



And today, as *Alfred Bader* enters his 80th year, Queen's honors its most generous benefactor by declaring that of May 8, 2004, Queen's Crescent, the street born as *Alice*, shall now be known as **Bader Lane**.

The new Bader Lane^(fig.) is a street bounded on the south by Ban Righ Hall where, in my student days, girls were carefully protected from men, and on the north by the Agnes Etherington Art Centre.

What a gift!

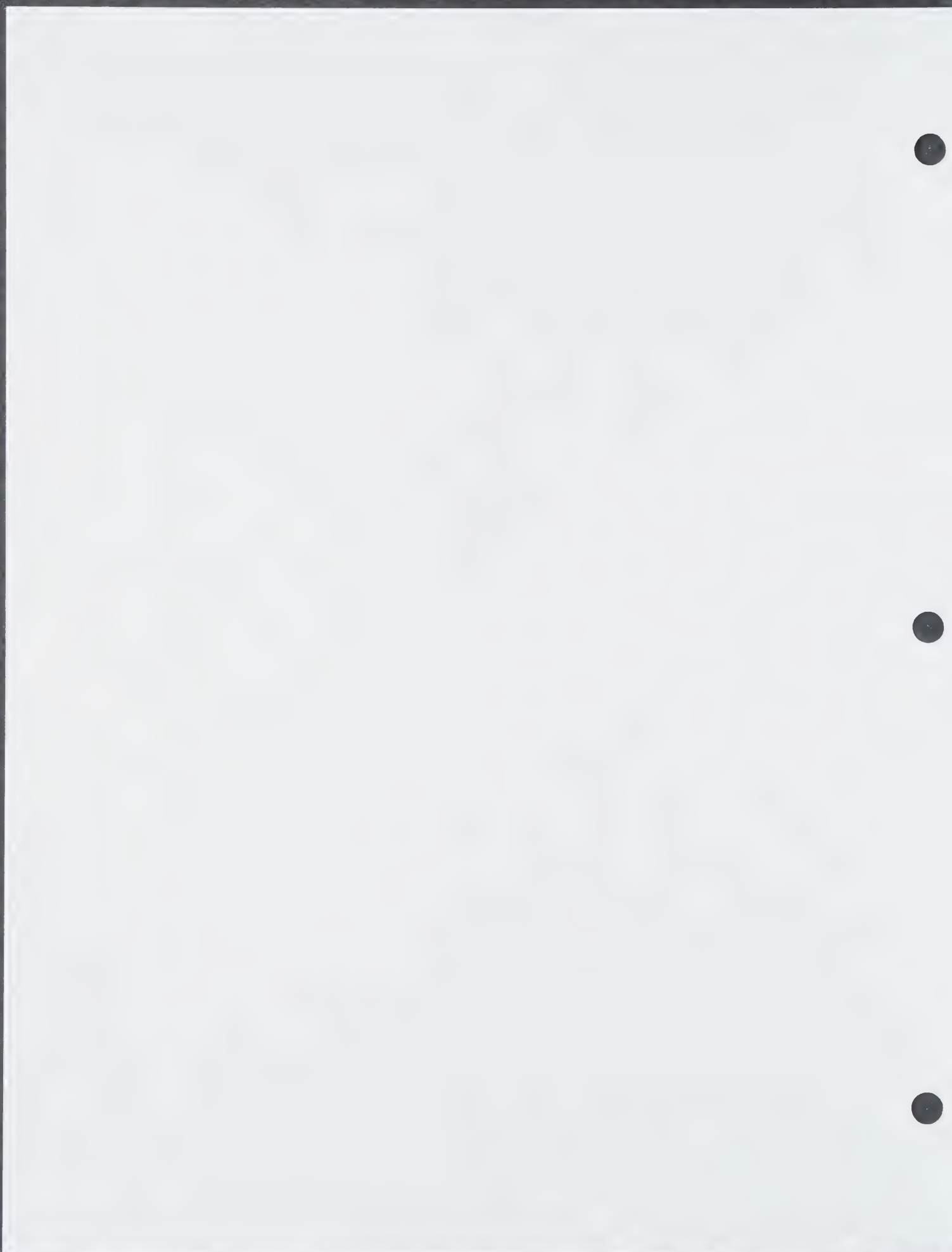
12 May 1940 had been one of the unhappiest days of my life. 12 May 2004 was one of the happiest, but there was still more to come.

The next day, the Art Department and the Agnes Etherington Art Centre held a joint celebration. David de Witt, Sebastian Schütze (the Bader Southern Baroque Chair), and Volker Manuth discussed three paintings, two Dutch and one Italian, in the Bader Gallery. At noon, we enjoyed a delicious luncheon hosted by Professor Gary Wagner in Ban Righ Hall with many of the students who had received our scholarships.

My talk at 3:00 about the history of Aldrich and Sigma-Aldrich was well attended and was followed by a public reception from 4:30-6:00, complete with another birthday cake and champagne.

Dinner in the evening was hosted by Mrs. Merle Koven, a member of the Queen's Board of Trustees and very active in the Kingston Jewish community. It was attended by Harvey Rosen, the Mayor of Kingston, and his wife, and many others who have worked hard to establish the program of Jewish studies at Queen's. A long day of happy celebrations.

The next morning, we met with Bob Silverman, Dean of Arts & Sciences, David Wardle of Chemistry, and John Oglivie of Art History to discuss all sorts of financial



matters relating to our gifts to their departments. One discussion centered on the endowment for the two Chairs, one in Northern and the other in Southern baroque art; the second discussion about the Bader Chair in organic chemistry; the third dealt with the declining deficit of the International Study Centre at Herstmonceux Castle, which we had agreed to cover during five years.

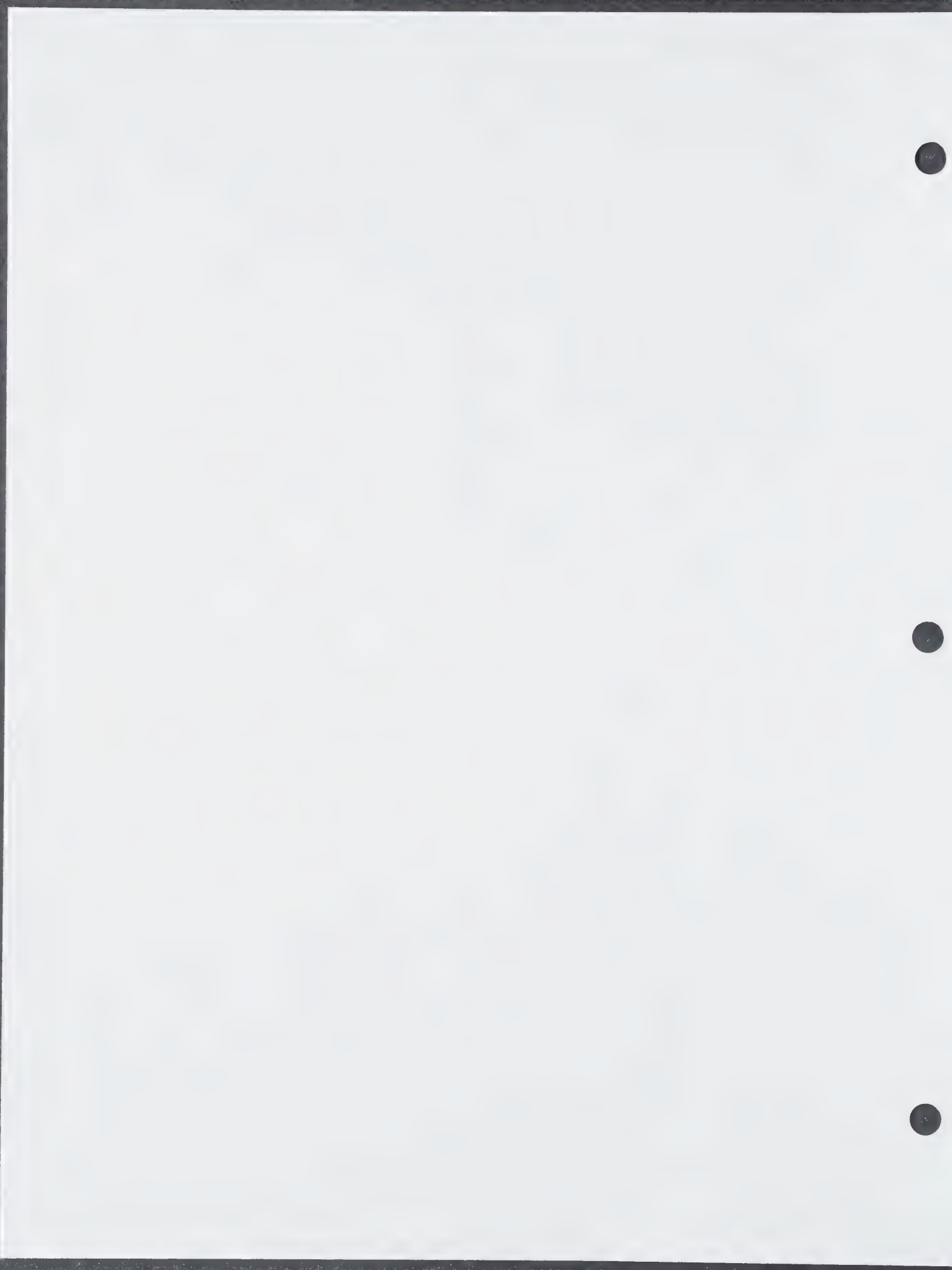
The last item of discussion was the question of whether we might be the lead donors to build a music and drama centre to be named after Isabel. Of course we agreed.

After a brief visit to Rabbi Daniel Elkin, Rosetta's son, we drove to the airport. Unfortunately, the plane developed mechanical problems, the replacement was caught in a thunderstorm, and two other replacements also could not make it until 11 p.m., but fortunately we had no urgent plans back in Milwaukee, so we spent a leisurely afternoon and evening and caught a plane home the next morning.

These full and truly wonderful days, far more moving than we could have imagined, are now memories to be relived and savored at leisure.

Until Monday, 22 March, I had not thought much about my birthday. Why should an eightieth birthday be so different from my seventy-ninth or eighty-first? But clearly it was, for on that Monday, Yechiel Bar Chaim arranged for a fine birthday luncheon in London. We had a quiet family birthday party in Milwaukee on 28 April and another at the home of Attorney Joseph and Audrey Bernstein on 3 May. Then followed the two-day celebration in Kingston and more parties in Brno and Prague in June. Again I can say with King David: "My cup runneth over."

Brno



Our first birthday event in Europe took place in the Czech Republic. Jiri Damborsky,^(fig.) the Loschmidt Professor of Chemistry at the Masaryk University in Brno, and Professor Skursky, one of our first contacts there, worked immensely hard to arrange a three-day celebration. Festivities began on 14 June with a sumptuous lunch at Masaryk University, attended by the university's rector, vice-rectors, dean, several professors, and the governor of Moravia who, after a welcoming speech in Czech, gave me a beautiful book on Moravia. My Czech, however, is nonexistent, and so I had to thank him in English. I enjoyed being able to tell him that my mother's great uncle, Otto Count Serenyi, had also been the governor of Moravia, Landeshauptmann, from 1910 until 1917.

Lunch was followed by a symposium in the Museum of Applied Arts. After my lecture on Josef Loschmidt, six Bader Award holders gave presentations of the work they are doing in the Czech Republic. It was a great pleasure to meet these young chemists, many for the first time. The break for a cup of tea was very welcome, too much to eat, but a good opportunity to talk to some of the many chemists and friends who had come for this event. When we returned to the hall, we were treated to a video conference with three Bader Fellows and Professor Henry Pinkham, Dean of Science at Columbia University. This was the first such hookup I had ever seen at a University; it went seamlessly and was a great success with us all.

I was able to speak directly to these three students and remind them that we had not established fellowships for Czech students in order to lure them to the West but in the hope that they would return to the Czech Republic. This exciting episode

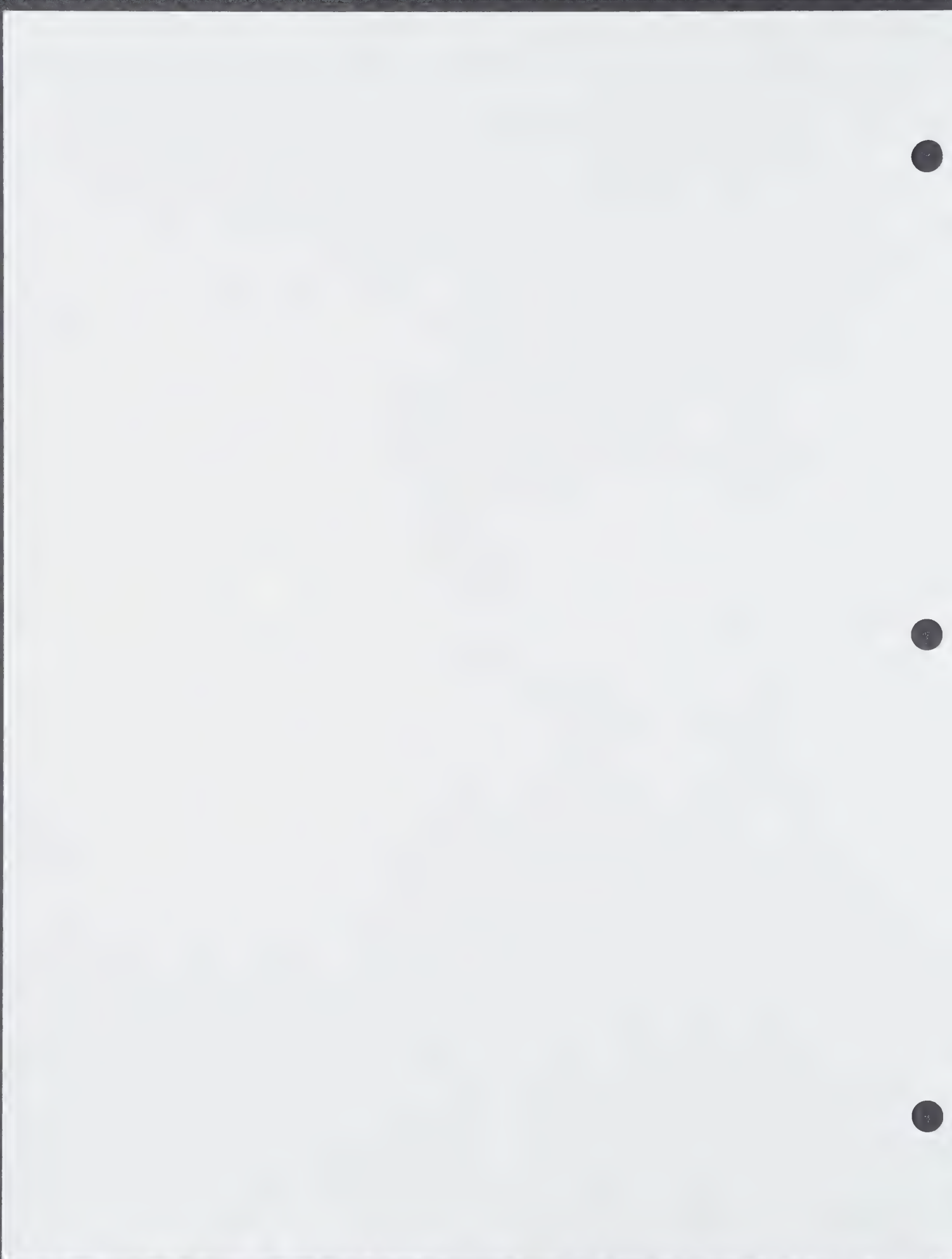


was followed by brief talks by three other Bader Fellows. Miloslav Nic received his PhD in London and returned to take a position at the Technical University in Prague. Kamil Paruch working at Schering-Plough, plans to return, perhaps to the Masaryk University, and Zora Wörgötter who received a Bader fellowship in art history, became a curator at the Moravian Gallery in Brno. We seldom have a chance to spend time with the young people we try to help, so this was a very welcome opportunity.

We then moved to the International Hotel, where the rector gave me a most surprising gift, the Imperial Order of the Iron Crown, III Class, the very award that had been given to Josef Loschmidt in Vienna at the time of his retirement. During an elaborate reception afterwards, I had time to talk to many more chemists and also to my distant cousin, Vera Bader Weber, and her husband Peter, who had come from Kyjov, my grandfather's home town. Although we felt we couldn't, and certainly shouldn't, eat a bite, the caterers had outdone themselves. We couldn't resist.

What a day it was! Jiri had worked so hard to make it a success, and he did want us to meet his family. We were glad to spend a couple of hours quietly that evening at home with him, his wife Martina, and their young son David. Martina had prepared a simple soup that reminded me of Isabel's soups at home. It was so good to end the day just chatting quietly with Jiri and his family.

We waited a long time for the Masaryk University to find a suitable chemist for the Loschmidt chair, but I am so pleased with their appointment of Jiri Damborsky. He is a brilliant, hard-working biochemist and such a fine human

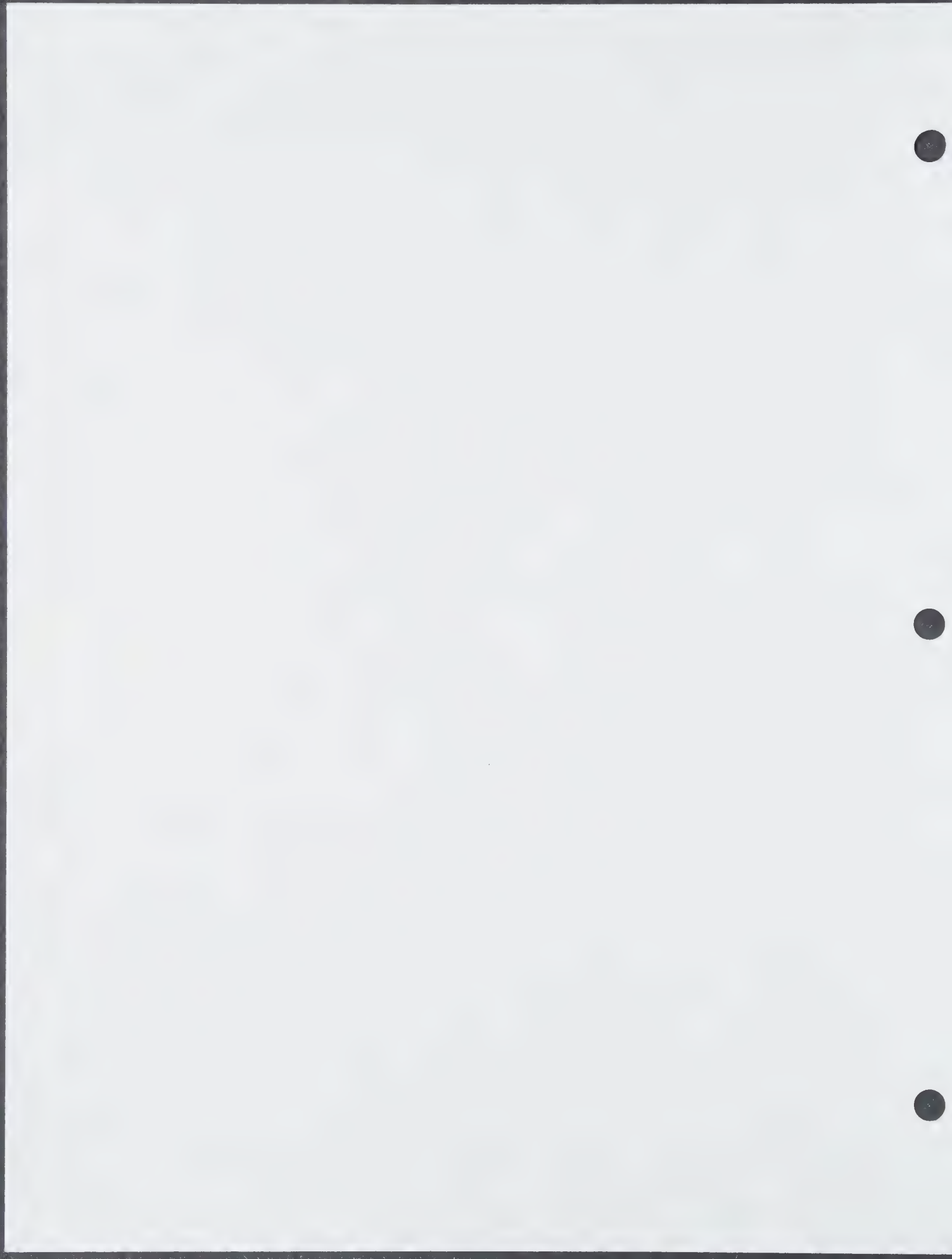


being. He has worked very hard to learn as much about Loschmidt as he can, studying material he collected during three days with us in Milwaukee. Much of this he has loaded onto a Web site (www.loschmidt.cz), which will help make Loschmidt known not only in the Czech Republic but throughout the world.

After an interview with Czech television the next morning, we set out for Prague by way of Nelazehoves Castle, where Prince William Lobkowitz was interested in discussing our suggestion that we fund a very able Czech art historian, Dr Vladan Antonovic, to work with some important prints in the Lobkowitz collection. Vladan received two Bader fellowships and his PhD from Innsbruck, but despite excellent work, he has found it very difficult to obtain a suitable position in the Czech Republic.

In Prague that evening, Yechiel Bar-Chaim had arranged another birthday celebration with a very interesting group who do all the groundwork for us in our efforts to help Roma and others in need. Then, finally, on our last evening, there was yet another dinner, this with art historians. For more than ten years, Professor Milena Bartlova has worked diligently to choose Bader fellows to study art outside the Czech Republic, many of whom have done very well. We are well satisfied with this project. It shows us that some of our efforts have been very fruitful indeed, and we really appreciate all the effort that so many good friends made to give us these wonderful three days in the land of my ancestors.

ACS



The rest of my eightieth year settled down until mid-March 2005, when celebrations took off again for a last big bang, this time in San Diego. During two astounding days, chemistry students, chemist co-workers, and academic friends took the opportunity at the American Chemical Society (ACS) convention to remind me of some of the happiest times of my life. A symposium titled Current Aspects in Synthetic Organic Chemistry had been organized in my honor by two of Herbert Brown's former students, P.V. (Chandran) Ramachandran, Professor at Purdue, and Clint Lane, who had come from Purdue in 1972 to head the new Aldrich Boranes and retired as the president of Aldrich in 2002.

Clint and Chandran represented my long years of close collaboration with Herb on borane chemistry. We had looked forward to sharing time with Herb and his wife Sarah, for whom the symposium had been specially arranged for Sunday afternoon and Monday morning so that they would not find it too tiring. How sad we were when we learned a few weeks earlier that Herb had died. His contributions to chemistry have been enormous - a whole new field, hydroboration. The hundreds of young students attending the symposium lost the opportunity of seeing this outstanding Nobel Laureate, at ninety-two, still intensely interested in scientific research and students.

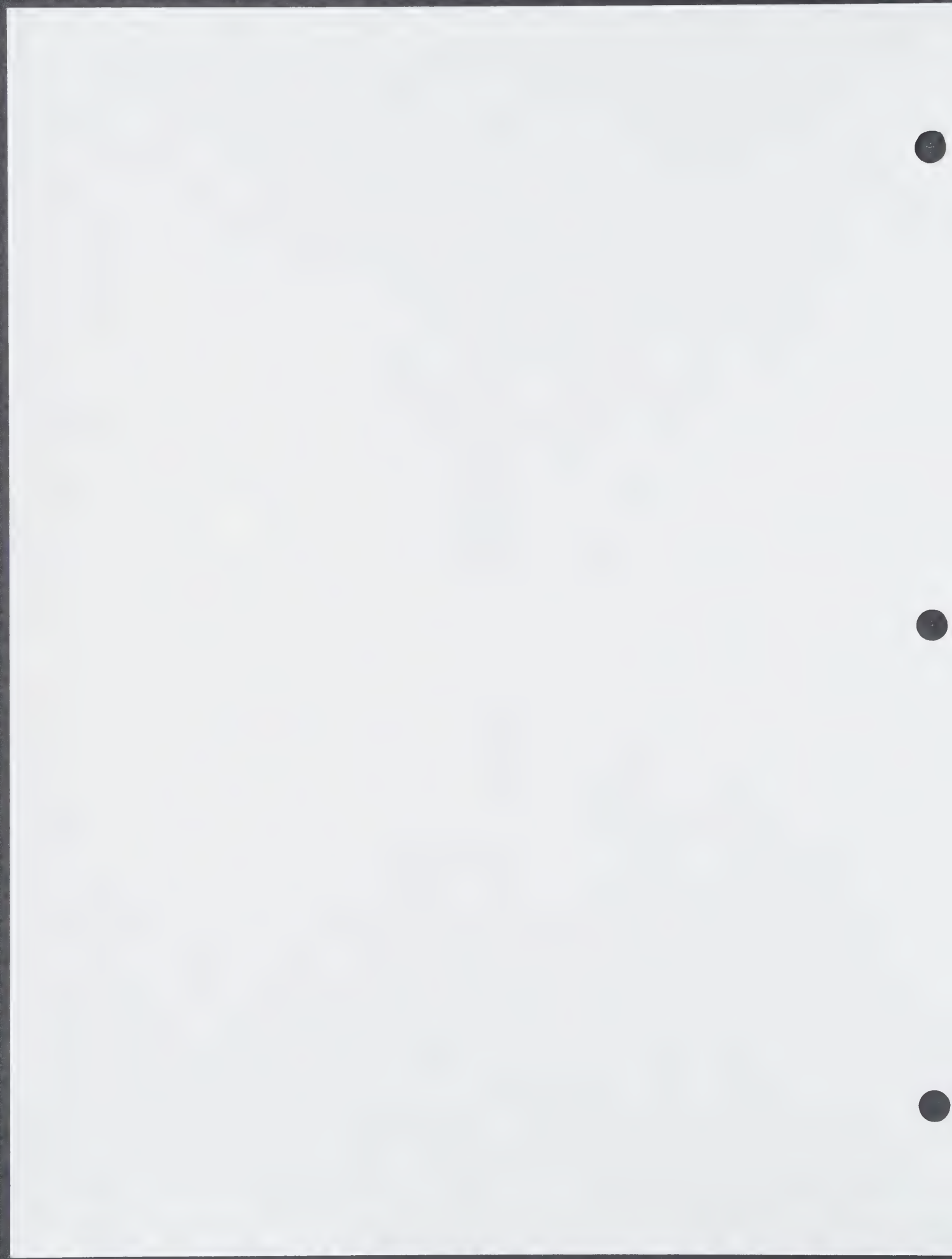
I was delighted to see that the symposium was sponsored by major chemical and pharmaceutical companies ^(fig.) including, to my surprise, Sigma-Aldrich. Eight brilliant chemists, longtime friends, gave riveting lectures, often referring briefly to connections Isabel and I had with them over the years. From the first, Ronald Breslow's lecture on biomimetic control in synthesis, to the last, Samuel Danishefsky's discussion of potential new cancer drugs, the audience - at times exceeding a thousand - was listening to the



research of truly great chemists. There was sometimes laughter, for instance when Barry Sharpless showed a picture of Isabel and me as an example of "click" chemistry at work (fig.) and Victor Snieckus showed a delightfully doctored photo (fig.) of a painting in which he had substituted me for Brande teaching Michael Faraday how to make Prussian Blue.

On Sunday evening, Isabel and I had the great pleasure of attending a Project SEED (Summer Educational Experience for the Disadvantaged; see Chapter 18 for more on SEED) dinner chaired by James Burke, Chair of the American Chemical Society Board of Directors, and Madelaine Jacobs, CEO of the American Chemical Society. We have long taken part in this outstanding ACS project to help young students pursue "college education in chemistry". A group of bright, happy, enthusiastic Bader scholars discussed the impact of the scholarships on their lives and presented us with a beautiful album with twelve moving letters describing their work. (fig.) It was heartening to see how they have used chemistry as a steppingstone to careers not only in chemistry but in dentistry, medicine, pharmacy, biology, and pharmaceutical companies.

The following evening, Stephen Quigley and I received the Henry Hill Awards given by the ACS for public service, and we then went briefly to a reception hosted by Madelaine Jacobs, and on to one of the most enjoyable dinners sponsored by Sigma-Aldrich that I have ever attended. Hosted by Chandran and Clint, the room was just full of old friends, among them Dr Jai Nagarkatti, now CEO of Sigma-Aldrich in St. Louis; and Clint, Ike Klundt, and Harvey Hopps, able chemists formerly at Aldrich. I just knew it would bring back some wonderful memories. They told all sorts of funny, often long-forgotten, stories about me accompanied by slides that really almost brought tears to my eyes.

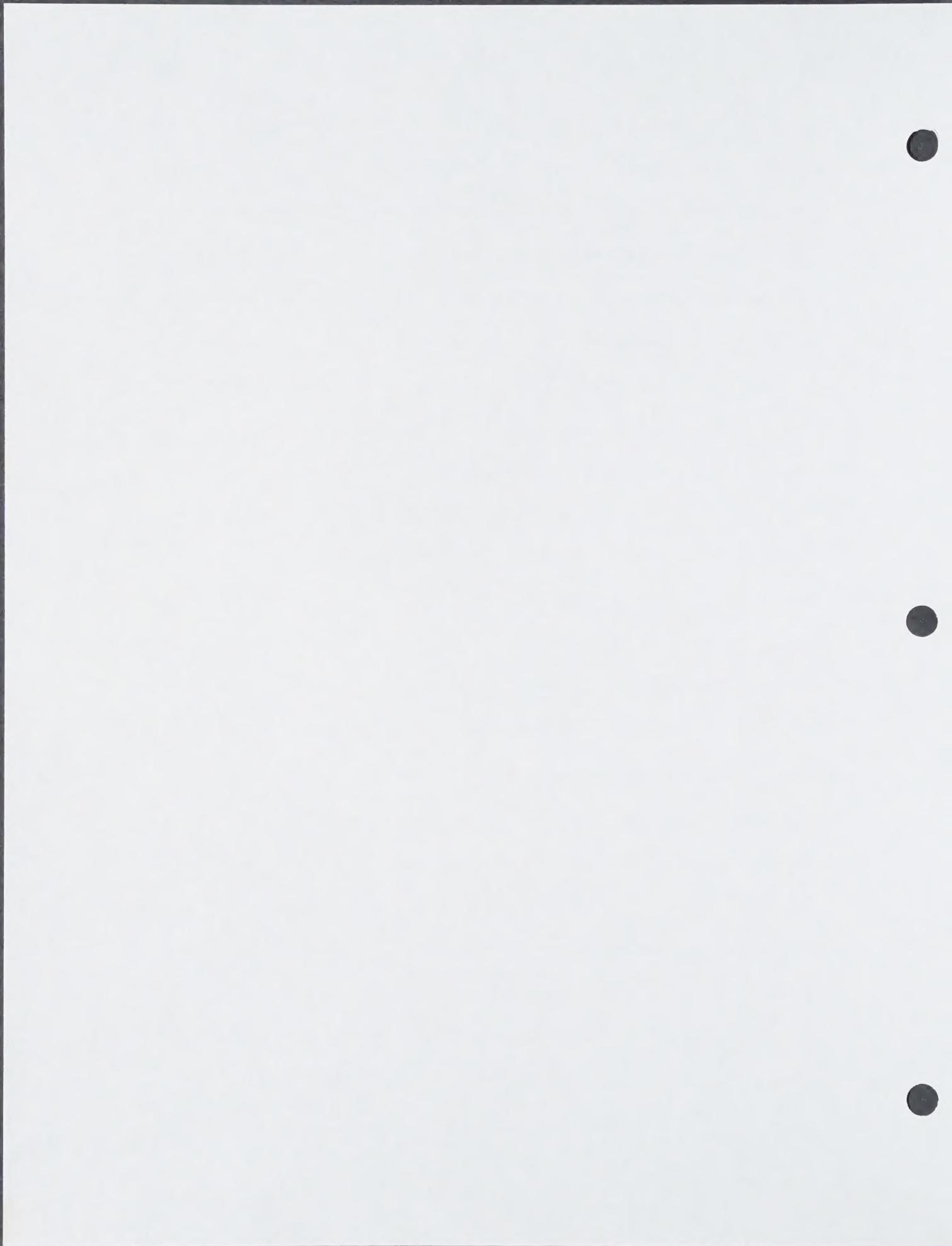


I had not expected to be asked to speak but was happy to say how good it was to be with so many old friends. Although my expulsion thirteen years earlier was a very painful experience, I was able to assure them that I had become happier and wealthier because I am able to choose the people with whom I work and because, although my first sale of Sigma-Aldrich call options was the excuse for my dismissal, I have since earned a good deal through further sales.

Our visit to booths in the exhibition the next day was a trip down Memory Lane. So many familiar faces, but so many changes as chemical firms have merged and reformed over the years. Finally, on our last evening, I was able to present the Alfred Bader Award in Bioinorganic or Bioorganic Chemistry in person to Sir Alan Fersht, an old friend from Cambridge University. And there was Gilbert Stork, receiving the Herbert C. Brown Award for Creative Research in Synthetic Methods. We don't often go to the ACS meetings these days, and I could not fail to be proud that this and three other awards came from Sigma-Aldrich. Who could have dreamed that the merger I worked so hard to achieve in 1975 would have resulted in our giving more ACS awards than any other firm. The Aldrich motto has always been "chemists helping chemists".

George Olah's Priestley Medal address at the end of the evening was a down-to-earth review of his scientific journey from Budapest to Dow, Cleveland, and the University of Southern California. Here was another refugee from Europe, whose work culminated in the Nobel Prize, and on that evening in the Priestley Medal, the highest award given by the American Chemical Society.

So many happy memories of work with chemists for half a century, but art, after all, was my first love, so before we left for the airport, we visited the Timken Museum.



When I introduced myself to John Petersen, the director, he apologized that he had little time to talk because he had to rush off to a meeting at his bank to arrange for payment of £1 million for a beautiful painting by Van Dyck, a portrait of Mary Villiers, Lady Herbert of Shurland, which had once belonged to Charles I. I had bought this painting with Philip Mould in August of 2001, and he had sold it through Christie's to the Timken Museum. I don't recall anyone ever having to cut our meeting short to attend another for a better reason. As we left San Diego, I thought yet once again of the 23rd Psalm: "My cup runneth over".

