

Andreas C. Albrecht

June 3, 1927 — September 26, 2002

Andreas C. Albrecht was born in Berkeley, California, but spent early parts of his childhood in Vienna, where his father, an anthropologist originally from Germany, pursued his doctoral research. He earned the B.S. degree in Chemistry from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1950, and the Ph.D. degree in Chemistry from the University of Washington in 1954. Following postdoctoral work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he began his long career at Cornell at the rank of Instructor in 1956. Progressing rapidly through the academic ranks, he was appointed Professor of Chemistry in 1965.

Andreas Albrecht built a highly distinguished career in the field of molecular spectroscopy, the determination of the structure and motions of molecules through their interaction with light. His work uniquely combined theoretical analysis with laboratory experiments to elucidate phenomena ranging from Raman scattering to photoconductivity in organic solids to nonlinear electronic spectroscopy carried out with incoherent light sources. His most recent work, in progress at the time of his death, treated spectroscopic phenomena unique to chiral (left- and right-handed) molecules.

Numerous awards, fellowships, and lectureships recognized his research accomplishments. He was a Fellow of the Japanese Society for Promotion of Science, a Fellow of the American Physical Society, and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was a Frontiers in Chemistry Lecturer at Texas A&M University and the Gillespie Lecturer of the Royal Society at University College, London. He received the 1986 Polychrome Corporation Award from the New York Academy of Sciences, the 1988 E.R. Lippincott Medal for Spectroscopy from the Optical Society of America, and the 1990 Earle K. Plyler Prize from the American Physical Society.

He took an interest in the practice of scientific research under more difficult circumstances than those prevailing at Cornell, in countries including the Soviet Union and Cuba. He was several times an exchange scientist in the United States-USSR Academy of Sciences Program.

A long list of graduate students, postdoctoral associates, visiting scientists, collaborators, and Cornell colleagues have benefited from his warmth, gentle humor, and keen scientific intuition. An outstanding teacher in the classroom and in the laboratory, he guided the undergraduate and graduate careers of generations of Cornell students. His discussions with coworkers and colleagues characteristically went beyond scientific matters to include music, the outdoors, and politics. His enthusiasm, counsel, and insight will be missed.