

Preface

The Present is the future of the Past and the past of the Future

*Motto used at Technion, the Israel
Institute of Technology, in Haifa*

Originally developed for the separation and characterization of naturally occurring plant pigments, in the 100 years since its invention the application of chromatography gradually extended into almost all fields of science: studies of complex natural substances and biochemical processes, investigations of the nature of petroleum and its derivatives, control of chemical syntheses, and determination of trace impurities polluting the soil and air, as well as the drinking and surface water of our planet. From a technique used 100 years ago by a lonely Russian botanist, chromatography eventually became the most widely used laboratory technique.

For my generation the rise of chromatography, its broadening out into various fields, and the development of its variants, was part of our life: we had been actively involved in it. We personally knew the principal players and regularly met them at the frequently held international symposia. There we learned about each others' work and could not wait the closing of the meeting when we rushed home to try out the others' newest results, adapting them to improve our own work. We also learned about the mistakes made by others, just as they learned about our errors. We were part of the evolution of chromatography: it was an exciting time.

Today's chromatographers represent a new, young generation who did not participate in the evolution of the various branches of

the technique: the events which have been observed firsthand by my generation represent the distant past to our young colleagues. Therefore, it is important for them to become familiar with the origin of the achievements they utilize in their daily work. Let us not forget the old saying: he who does not know history will repeat past mistakes!

This book represents an attempt to explore the evolution of chromatography, examine the background of the key developments — placing them in the proper historical context — and investigate the life and work of the pioneers. I hope that our readers will not only enjoy the fascinating stories how these milestones of chromatography were developed, but also learn a lesson from them, that they can utilize in their everyday's work.

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