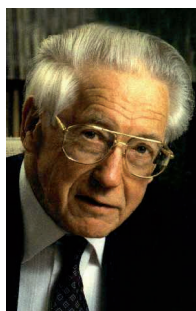


Robert W. Parry (1917–2006)

On December 1, 2006, Robert W. Parry, Distinguished Professor of Chemistry, Emeritus at the University of Utah,



passed away following a series of strokes. He was 89 years old.

Born in Ogden, Utah, on October 1, 1917, Robert Parry completed his BSc in soil chemistry in 1940 at the Utah State Agricultural College (now Utah State University). He continued his studies of soil chemistry at Cornell University, earning an MSc degree in 1942. For his PhD, Parry turned to the subject of inorganic chemistry and studied with John C. Bailar, Jr. at the University of Illinois.

After his graduation in 1946, he joined the chemistry faculty of the University of Michigan. There, his prime research interests developed from transition-metal chemistry to the chemistry of the boron hydrides and main-group chemistry in general. At that time, there was intense interest in the boron hydrides and Robert Parry soon established himself to be preeminent in this field. His research group developed the first modern vacuum-line techniques and methods for working with materials in a vacuum line, departing from the then-standard Stock-type systems. Many of his seminal contributions to boron hydride chemistry were made at a time when the instrumentation we are used to today (IR and NMR spectroscopy, single crystal X-ray crystallography) was unavailable. Thus, while the longstanding question of the structure of the “diammoniate of diborane” can be solved in minutes by NMR spectroscopy, in Parry’s day the question was solved by clever and insightful

chemical studies that showed the compound to be $[\text{BH}_2(\text{NH}_3)_2][\text{BH}_4]$. Over a period of some twenty years, Parry’s group unraveled the chemistry of the lower boron hydrides, their base adducts, and their anion derivatives in a series of elegant studies that included the discovery of H_3NBH_3 , a compound of current interest for hydrogen storage, and the preparation and study of tetraborane and triborane derivatives, including $\text{H}_3\text{NB}_3\text{H}_7$, $[\text{BH}_2(\text{NH}_3)_2][\text{B}_3\text{H}_8]$, and $\text{F}_2\text{PN}(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{B}_4\text{H}_8$. Parry took advantage of the isoelectronic relationship between BH_3CO and CO_2 to examine its amine chemistry to form ammonium carbamate analogues and its reaction with bases to form a borano-carbonate analogue of the carbonate ion. A seminal contribution, co-authored with L. J. Edwards entitled “Systematics in the Chemistry of Boron Hydrides”,^[1] which was published in 1959, foreshadowed later contributions by other investigators in the field. Parry’s interests in main-group chemistry extended beyond the boron hydrides. He made noteworthy contributions to phosphine and fluorophosphine chemistry and initiated activities in this area at the University of Michigan and continued them during his tenure at the University of Utah.

Robert Parry’s career at the University of Michigan extended over some 23 years. In this period, he not only established himself at the forefront of boron hydride chemistry but was also recognized to be an outstanding teacher with unimpeachable integrity and devotion to his students. In 1969, Parry joined the department of chemistry at the University of Utah as Distinguished Professor of Chemistry. From that time until his death, he was a valued and very much respected colleague and teacher. At Utah he continued his research activities, focusing on fluorophosphine chemistry. Parry retired in 1997 but continued to be an active member of the chemistry department until shortly

before his death. For approximately 50 years during this productive and outstanding research career, Robert Parry had a loyal friend, confidant, and collaborator in Professor Goji Kodama.

Over the course of his 60-year career, Robert Parry served the scientific community in many ways, through education, research (150 papers), and service. He taught thousands of undergraduate students and mentored some 60 PhD students and postdoctoral fellows. His research was groundbreaking and inspired the work of others in the field. He was the founding editor of *Inorganic Chemistry* (1962–1964), President of *Inorganic Synthesis* (1969–1972), and an Associate Editor of the *Journal of the American Chemical Society* (1966–1968 and 1971–1980).

Robert Parry was well recognized for his accomplishments and service and received numerous awards and honors, such as the ACS Award for Distinguished Service in Inorganic Chemistry (1965), the Manufacturing Chemists Award for Excellence in the Teaching of College Chemistry (1972), the ACS Award in Chemical Education (1977), the Alexander von Humboldt Senior US Scientist Award (1980 and 1983), honorary doctorates from Utah State University (1985) and the University of Utah (1997), and the most prestigious award of the ACS, the Priestly Medal (1993).

Robert Parry is survived by his wife of 61 years Marjorie, his sons Bryce and Mark, and his grandchildren Russell, Marelle, Lauren, Kristie, and Robert.

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[1] R. W. Parry, L. J. Edwards, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **1959**, *81*, 3554–3560.

DOI: 10.1002/anie.200700221