



Title 7

Professor Carl Djerassi, a Member of the ISR Editorial Board, has added a literary career to his other achievements and calls his genre “science-in-fiction”, imparting his stories with scientific facts. *Artist: Peter Lightfoot, Courtesy David Fishlock, R&D Efficiency.*

Carl Djerassi enjoyed his wealth in a different way, collecting something else, as for example Degas sculptures as he described in his two autobiographies. He also set up a foundation in California for young artists, and has now started a new career as an author, writing novels about contemporary scientists; he calls his series *fiction in science*. He is of course carrying on as Professor of Chemistry at Stanford University in California. His writing of novels takes place in a small flat in London where he feels free from the scientific and social duties of his university. Like Frank he has made excellent use of his wealth, enjoying the great freedom he achieved, through being independent.

John Arthur Birch, the third of my rich chemist-friends, was born in Australia and had a hard life, his father being a pastry cook at a leading Sydney Hotel, and after his death, his mother worked hard to finance Arthur's university studies. Once started on his chemical career he achieved early fame through the discovery of a chemical reduction reaction, ever since called after him, the 'Birch Reaction'. For any scientist to have a discovery linked to his name is a very rare event(except in Biology)and in the special hierarchy of scientific honours, a named discovery comes not far after receiving the Nobel Prize.

I do not know of any special way in which Arthur really enjoyed his wealth, if not through his frequent world wide first-class travels. He built for himself and his family a lovely house in one of Canberra's best suburbs, as luxuriously as he could, in Yarralumla, the Diplomatic quarter of Canberra, Australia's capital garden city. In the centre of the large house, it had a courtyard in the Spanish style in which there was a great swimming pool and thus he, and of course his guests, could step straight from their bedrooms into the pool—a pleasure which I was often able to enjoy.

All three, Frank, Carl and Arthur, were the leading research chemists at Syntex, the company which developed the birth control pill. As they were highly successful, the Company's shares increased in value, they were divided and rose again, divided again, and thus those who had invested in their own work grew rich. Indeed a very rare tale and here included because it is the exception that proves the rule: Scientists never take up their careers in order to make money. It can happen, and must have happened also in the past, but more likely for engineers in the 19th century.