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Tom Morton was born in Los Angeles, where his family was employed by the motion picture industry. He received his AB magna cum laude from Harvard in 1968 and his PhD in organic chemistry from Caltech in 1973. Since 1972 he has served on the chemistry faculties of Brown University, Brandeis University, and, since 1981, the University of California, Riverside, where he is professor of chemistry. He also serves as a cooperating faculty member in the department of biochemistry and the department of cell biology & neuroscience.