

OBITUARY

WOLFGANG JOHANN ERNST GEORG BONTE, 1939–2000

University-Professor Dr. med., Academy Fellow Wolfgang Johann Ernst Georg Bonte passed away on October 21, 2000 at age 61, following a long illness. Religious service was held at the Johannes church in Duesseldorf and burial service at the cemetery in Duesseldorf-Itter, attended by family members, friends, and colleagues. He is survived by his wife, Ina Edeltraud Bonte. They had no children.

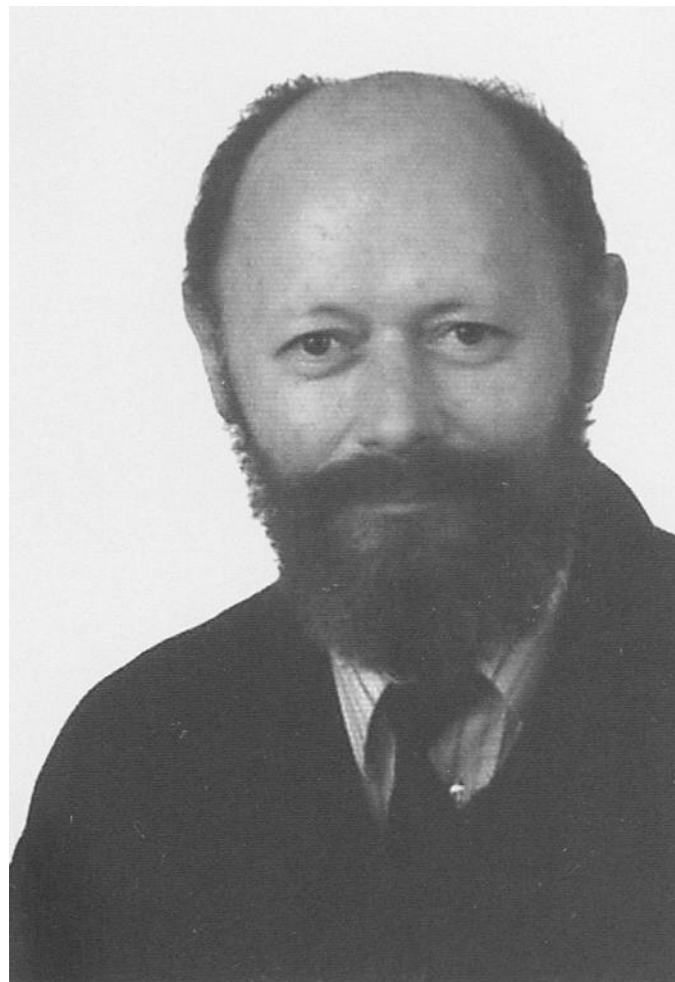
Professor Bonte was born in Nordhausen on September 22, 1939. He completed his specialty training in legal medicine at the Institute of Legal Medicine, University of Goettinger, and the Institute of Pathology, University of Hamburg. After graduation, he was appointed Privatdozent (second position of the teaching rank) at the University of Goettingen.

In 1985, he was appointed as Chairman of the Institute of Legal Medicine at the Heinrich-Heine University of Duesseldorf, where he served until his death. He was a member of major academic organs at the University. Among them were the Senate, the Faculty Council, and several commissions of the Medical Faculty.

He was an active researcher in his profession and published more than 100 papers, which appeared in major international journals in the forensic sciences. In addition, he published 14 books covering all aspects in the field of forensic sciences. His major pioneering achievement was his work on the congener of alcohol, which is considered to be one of the basic publications in the forensic sciences. One of his favorite subjects was archeology, and his Institute became the first and only Institute of Legal Medicine in Germany to employ an archeologist. Several publications of studies on the Vikings in America, on a sword of the Franc Period found in Duesseldorf, on moorland cadavers, and on the remains of World War II American bomber crews resulted from this cooperation.

He believed in international exchange of information on scientific advances in the forensic sciences and medicine. He attended the meetings of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) since the 1980s and became a member, Pathology and Biology Section in 1991. He was elevated to the rank of Fellow in 1997. He took part in the scientific and the business meetings of the Academy annually and his wife Ina was always with him. At the AAFS meeting in Anaheim, California in 1991, I invited the international attendees, members of the National Association of Medical Examiners and staff members of the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office to a dinner get-together at the Athenia Dinner Theater in Hollywood. Professor and Mrs. Bonte were among the two vans full of colleagues, who attended and enjoyed the excellent Greek food, and more importantly, the fellowship of true friends among our forensic colleagues.

Professor Bonte and Mrs. Bonte regularly attended and actively participated in various professional international meetings. In 1989, he received the Widmark Award from the International Association of Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety. In 1990 at the Adelaide, Australia meeting, he was elected President of the International Association of Forensic Sciences (IAFS). The highlight of his career was the 13th Congress of the IAFS, which he



hosted as President in 1993. He sent special invitations to colleagues in the former East Germany and the East European countries, expanding our international professional contacts. The Congress was held on the huge campus of the University of Duesseldorf with impressive attendance of some 1500 forensic scientists from all over the world.

Professor Bonte believed that communication on medicolegal matters to the general public is an important aspect of public education, and was an able and respected communicator for the profession through radio, TV, and other media. He established an outstanding forensic medical museum at the Institute, which is open to the public once a year. At the 1993 IAFS Congress, he arranged a special skit starring a surprise mystery guest, who turned out to be Jack Klugman, the star of the *Quincy* TV program. I was then surprised again to be asked to come up on the stage to meet Klugman. In the summer of 1999, I saw him and his wife Ina at the meeting

of the World Association of Police Medical Officers (WPMO) in Vancouver and again in Los Angeles, where the IAFS meeting was held immediately following the WPMO meeting.

The last time I saw him was in September of this year at the meeting of the Board of Directors of the German Society of Legal Medicine (GSML) in Essen, Germany. I was kindly assigned a seat next to him. I admired his great spiritual strength. He was weak from his illness, but he stayed during the entire session of the Board

meeting. I have many fond memories of our wonderful friendship and will greatly miss him. Our profession and the world has lost a great educator and able communicator for the forensic sciences and a humanitarian. We will all miss him.

Thomas T. Noguchi, M.D.

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