



Preface to the Josef M. G. Barthel Festschrift

It is a special pleasure for me to introduce this Festschrift of the *Journal of Chemical & Engineering Data* in honor of Professor Emeritus Dr. Josef M. G. Barthel. A Festschrift in this journal is appropriate because of Barthel's outstanding role in solution chemistry. What connects him strongly with *JCED*—although he rarely published in this journal—is the common spirit, the conviction that science can only advance if theory is backed by solid experimental data. Producing lasting experimental results was always a major driving force for him, a driving force that gave us, his students, freedom to experiment and explore the technical possibilities available at the time.

Born March 9, 1929, in Zerf, Germany, a small town close to Trier and not far from the border with Luxembourg, he studied mathematics and physics in Saarbrücken from 1947 to 1953 and then earned a Ph.D. in chemistry at the same university in 1956. At that time, the Saarland was under French administration, and the university was a branch of the University of Nancy. Surely, these special circumstances fostered his connections to France. He was not only a regular Visiting Professor at the University Paris VII from the 1960s onward but also always very active in promoting scientific relations between France and Germany, an activity which was recognized by a *Doctor honoris causa* award from the University Diderot, Paris.

After his habilitation in 1959, Barthel became senior assistant, lecturer, and then professor at the University of Saarbrücken, where he primarily worked on problems in thermodynamics and reaction kinetics. In 1971, he moved to the chair of physical chemistry at the newly founded University of Regensburg. There he set up a large institute of solution chemistry, expanding his research areas to include electrochemistry, transport properties, dielectric relaxation, and infrared spectroscopy of electrolyte systems. As a result of his aim for the best possible data, instruments were generally developed in his institute that yielded results often unreached in accuracy until now.

During his active time in Regensburg, Barthel served the university as a dean, vice president and vice dean. He was an active member in many national and international committees and organizations, including the European Molecular Liquids Group and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), where he is currently a Fellow. He also organized several international meetings, some within the recognized series sponsored by IUPAC, including the International Conference on Solution Chemistry (ICSC). Since 1997 he has been an Emeritus Professor in Regensburg, using his “free time” to serve as the Editor-in-Chief for the *Journal of Molecular Liquids* from 1997 to 2007.

Barthel's ideas inspired 79 Ph.D. students and about the same number of diploma students, leading to ~290 primary publications in leading scientific journals. He also authored four monographs and ~20 volumes of the *Electrolyte Data Collection*, a survey of critically selected and reevaluated electrolyte properties published within the *Chemistry Data Series* of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Chemisches Apparatewesen (DECHEMA).

Barthel always had and still has many international connections. Visitors from abroad were common in Regensburg, and fostering international collaboration among scientists, not only between France and Germany, was always one of his major goals. These efforts have been recognized by various awards, including the N. S. Kurnakov Memorial Medal of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He is also a corresponding member of the Academia Peloritana, Messina, and the European Academy of Science, Paris.

Even now, at age 81, Barthel is still regularly in his office. His focus has shifted to the history of science, but he still works as a reviewer and keeps an active interest in the research of his former students. But science is not everything. Josef Barthel and his wife Marga share a wide range of interests, ranging from literature to history. Both are keen art collectors and enjoyable hosts, as many of us know and remember with pleasure.

Richard Buchner

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