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In memoriam Dr. Johannes Opfermann (1940–2004)

We mourn the loss of Johannes Opfermann, who passed away in Jena, Germany a few days after his 64th birthday as the result of a short-lived but serious illness.

Johannes Opfermann was born on January 12, 1940 in Dingelstädt/Eichsfeld. He attended school there and received his high-school diploma in 1958. After an apprenticeship as a machinist, he studied at the University of Jena from 1960-1965 and graduated with a degree in physics. From 1965 to 1991, he was on the scientific staff of the Department of Chemistry at the University of Jena and was active in the field of organic polymer chemistry. He designed an electrophysical research laboratory which he equipped with highly sensitive self-constructed instruments and developed into a competent research site for photoelectric and electro-photographic properties of semi-conductive polymers. His work has had a lasting influence on polymer semi-conductor research in Jena.

Scientific achievements of particular importance were his relatively early (1970-1980) exact characterization of the semi-conductor properties of conjugated polymers of polyphenylene vinylenes (PPV), which are currently a prevalent topic in the world of research, and the development of a model for the photo-induced conductivity mechanism and for the kinetics of the photo-current in these polymers. He earned his PhD in 1977 on the basis of this work. In close cooperation with synthesis chemists from the university and with material researchers from academic institutions and from the East German electronic industry, his work from this period is documented in over 40 publications, 60 lectures, and numerous international patent specifications.

In the 1970s, he also conceived and constructed an electromagnetically compensated thermobalance which was at least on par with the Cahn Balance in its attributes. Encouraged by the successful construction of this instrument, he afterwards carried over his kinetic interpretation of optical spectra to thermo-analytical test results. The course was thereby set for a scientific problem which was to occupy him until his death. Already at the ESTAC IV in Jena in 1987, he was so convincing with his concept for reaction kinetics that a license contract was signed with NETZSCH-Gerätebau GmbH in 1988.

After the re-unification of Germany, Dr. Opfermann moved to NETZSCH-Gerätebau in Selb in the summer of 1991 as the director of the Software Department; in this position, he provided crucial momentum to the development of the NETZSCH software for MS-Windows . His inventiveness, however, did not stop at software. In 2002, he became director of the R&D Department and held this position until his death. The "*NETZSCH-Thermokinetics*" software package, which he developed and consistently improved upon, is among the best kinetic evaluation programs in the world. In the periodic

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workshops for thermokinetics, which took place mostly in Selb but also in the USA, he was always able to convince the audience of his concept. This was also true of his other lecture activity at conferences and continuing education events. Many publications which he co-authored with colleagues also stem from this period.

Dr. Opfermann's enthusiasm for science was always on a par with his love for music. He sang tenor in numerous choirs and was also in high demand as a soloist. No member of the "Consortium for Thermal Analysis" in former East Germany will ever forget his performance at a conference in 1990 in Jena, when he the portrayed the peculiarities of the old city and its university through the medium of song.

Hannes Opfermann was certainly an exceptional human being, modest and endearing, obsessed by science and music and, in his concepts and ideas, always a step ahead.

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Dr. Hans-Jürgen Flammersheim
Dr. Werner Ludwig
Dr. Michael Feist
Erwin Kaisersberger
Dr. Wolf-Dieter Emmerich