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Obituary

Wilfried A. König (1939–2004)

On 19 November 2004, Professor Wilfried A. König passed away, just 3 weeks after his 65th birthday.

Prof. König, a pioneer in enantioselective gas chromatography, was born on 28 October 1939 in Rýmařov (formerly Römerstadt), a small town in the Czech Republic. After the second world war, he came to Germany and started his study of chemistry at the University of Tübingen in 1959, and in 1968 he obtained his doctoral degree under Ernst Bayer. Subsequently, during 1968–1970 he spent two years as a Postdoctoral Fellow and visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Houston and Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, joining E. Gil-Av's group. Back to Tübingen, he received the habilitation degree in 1974. Since 1975, he has been a Professor of Analytical Organic Chemistry running a large research group at the Institute of Organic Chemistry, University of Hamburg.

Wilfried König's research activities cover a broad spectrum of topics, however, gas chromatographic separation of enantiomers represents a continuous thread throughout his scientific work. Among his methodological approaches were the development of new (chiral) reagents for the derivatisation of less volatile (polar) or sensitive compounds as well as for the transformation of enantiomers into diastereomers. On the other hand, he permanently improved chiral stationary phases and finally achieved a breakthrough with the introduction of modified cyclodextrins (1988). Since then, enantioselective gas chromatography has become a standard analytical method, worldwide. He has been involved in a countless number of national and international co-operative efforts with research groups at universities and industry, dealing with investigations on chiral pharmaceuticals as well as agrochemicals and their metabolites, on organic pollutants and on the analysis of the enantiomeric composition of chiral components of flavours and essential oils.

The chemistry of natural products was Wilfried König's second field. His earlier work predominantly concerned structure elucidation of secondary metabolites from animals, plants, and microorganisms with special emphasis on peptide antibiotics. The chitinase-inhibiting nikkomycin and its derivatives were subject of a number of investigations between 1976 and 1992. Methodologi-

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cal developments in mass spectrometry (FAB for peptide analysis) and early activities in chiral selectors for capillary electrophoresis and HPLC are proof of his versatility and mental flexibility. After having left the field of antibiotics about 10 years ago, he concentrated on the isolation and structural elucidation of low molecular secondary metabolites from higher plants, mosses, and liverworts. Structure elucidation of sesquiterpenes (including their biosynthesis) are strongly represented; his "Atlas of Spectral Data of Sesquiterpene Hydrocarbons" (together with D. Joulain, 1998) and the corresponding electronic version are indispensable for everybody dealing with the analysis of terpenes.

Wilfried König has always been highly prolific – his list of publications comprises more than 450 papers, many of these in *Phytochemistry*. For his pioneering investigations and outstanding achievements in chromatographic sciences and the structure elucidation of organic compounds he received in 2004 the prestigious M. J. E. Golay Award at the 27th International Symposium on Capillary Chromatography in Riva del Garda, Italy. As a member of the Editorial Board of *Phytochemistry* he was one of the most active referees supporting numerous authors by his profound knowledge of plant chemistry.

He liked field trips to collect special liverworts and mushrooms in the Harz mountains, the Mediterranean region, and Asia. He loved Asian culture and visited Japan every year. In 2002, the ISEO-TEAC symposium was held in Tokushima, Japan. All participants were impressed not only with his outstanding presentation of chiral organic chemistry but also by his wonderful Awa-dance.

Wilfried König will always be remembered for the exceptional quality of his scientific work. We have not only lost a most stimulating innovative scientist but also a wonderful generous friend.

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