



Ekkehard Winterfeldt

May 13, 1932 – October 11, 2014

Ekkehard Winterfeldt passed away on October 11, 2014 in Isernhagen, Germany. Recognized as a scholar and a gentleman, his passion, excitement, and enthusiasm about organic chemistry were on display to all those who had the pleasure to work with him.

Winterfeldt was born on May 13, 1932 in Danzig. Upon completion of the Second World War, he finished his high-school education in 1952 in Schleswig. He initiated studies in chemistry at the Technische Hochschule Braunschweig, and joined the research group of Ferdinand Bohlmann. He completed a diploma thesis on the synthesis of oenanthotoxin, and completed his Ph.D. dissertation on the synthesis of hydroxysparteines in 1958. He moved with Bohlmann to the Technische Universität (TU) Berlin where he completed his habilitation in 1962, working on the structural characterization and synthesis of lupin alkaloids. He accepted a position at the University of Hannover (now Leibniz Universität Hannover) in 1970 where he served as Director of the Institut für Organische Chemie until his retirement in 2000. He continued as Professor Emeritus until his death in 2014.

Early on at Berlin, he was interested in the synthesis of alkaloids, and completed the first total syntheses of a variety of indole alkaloids, such as akuammigine, tetrahydroalstonine, and ajmalicine. He also started working on stereoselective transformations of triple bonds, which resulted in a variety of practical protocols still employed today.

In Hannover he continued with his lifelong passion, the stereoselective syntheses of alkaloids. Syntheses of camptothecin, geissoschizine, and natural products of the indoloquinolizine family were followed by syntheses of the histrionicotoxins, toxins isolated from South American frogs, and a wide variety of cyclopentane-containing natural products. For syntheses of prostaglandins, carbacyclins, macrolides, triquinanes, and sesquiterpenes, a stereoselective approach based on 4-acetoxy-2-cyclopentene-1-one as the substitute for cyclopentadienone was developed in his laboratories. During the 1980's, a widely used synthetic route to ansa-steroids was developed. His work using

Diels–Alder reactions introduced the concept of using chiral dienes for the introduction of chirality into achiral molecules. Syntheses of natural products such as didemnonones or clavularin A emanated from this protocol. His studies on the synthesis of unsymmetrical bissteroidal pyrazines laid the groundwork for the synthesis of the cephalostatins.

In addition to his scholarly contributions, Winterfeldt earned a reputation as a passionate, energetic, and dedicated educator. Almost 200 Ph.D. students were trained under his supervision, and he published more than 240 papers with these coworkers. His early morning lectures, presented with energy and a very human face, were particularly memorable.

He served as a co-Editor of several scientific journals, including *Organic Syntheses*, where he served on the Board of Editors from 1986-1991. During his long and distinguished career Ekkehard Winterfeldt received numerous awards including the Emil Fischer Medal (1990), the Adolf Windaus Medal (1993), and the Richard Kuhn Medal (1995), and an honorary doctorate from the University of Liege (1991). He also was extraordinary in his service to the field of Chemistry, a true ambassador for Chemistry. Among his achievements, he was elected President of the Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker (German Chemical Society; GDCh) 1996/1997. During his time as President he was responsible for the reorientation (Europeanization) of the GDCh journals and for establishing the “JungChemikerForum” which is now an established section of the GDCh. In 2011, he was appointed an Honorary Member of the GDCh for his contributions towards the advancement of chemistry and the goals of the GDCh. He was also a member of the Senate of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Kuratorium of the Fonds der Chemischen Industrie.

With his service on the *Organic Syntheses* Board of Editors Ekkehard became well known personally to several of the present members of the *Organic Syntheses* family. Beginning in the late 1980's several of us including the authors had the good fortune to be hosted by Ekkehard at the Institute for Organic Chemistry in Hannover during a sabbatical leave with the generous support of the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung. As a result of these visits, Ekkehard spent a period as a visiting professor at the University of California, Irvine in early 1990. It was always a delight to discuss chemistry with Ekkehard, as he was interested in all aspects of organic synthesis. He particularly liked chemistry that was practical, which made him a highly sought consultant in the pharmaceutical industry and an insightful member of the *Organic Syntheses* Board of Editors.

Winterfeldt was a regular presence at national and international chemistry meetings where his booming voice and thunderous laugh could easily be heard above the din of the crowd. Indeed, the halls and laboratories of the Institute regularly reverberated with his laugh when he was present as his students and colleagues will attest.

Ekkehard Winterfeldt was an innovative researcher, a true scholar, and an even finer human being. He was strongly supportive of his students and colleagues and many have gone on to prominent positions in Chemistry around

the world. But more than that, he was a warm and generous man, who welcomed all with whom he had the occasion to interact both inside and outside chemistry. He cared deeply for his wife Marianne and his children, and loved good food, drink, and the company of friends. He enjoyed immensely the outdoors and his lovely wooden home in Isernhagen of which he was so proud.

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