



## In Memoriam, H. Michael Widmer

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Not even his closest friends knew, *H. Michael Widmer* (1933–1997) was fighting cancer for the last two years, a fight he lost on May 26, 1997. Returning from a trip to Washington, DC, where he attended an editorial advisory board meeting of *Analytical Chemistry*, he felt so weak that he finally returned home to Bern to stay with his daughter and her family. It meant a lot to him to come home to Bern, the city he was born and grew up and loved so much.

He left Bern to study chemistry at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zürich graduating with Ph.D. in inorganic chemistry. His thesis, under the guidance of Prof. *Gerold Schwarzenbach*, dealt with coordination chemistry. The ETH became a second home for him, for he kept close ties to his *alma mater* all his life, both through friendships with ETH researchers and through teaching classes in analytical biotechnology.

It was not before his postdoc years at the Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, Long Island, NY, when he discovered another love, that would keep him busy for the rest of his scientific life: analytical chemistry. His years at the Brookhaven really made a lasting impression for he liked to tell more than 30 years what a wonderful place it has been. In early 1970, he moved North to Boston, MA, to accept a position as Associate Professor of Analytical Chemistry at the University of Massachusetts.

After 10 years in the United States, he decided with his family to go back to Switzerland, where he joined in 1974 *Ciba-Geigy* in Basel. At first, he got involved with capillary gas chromatography and liquid chromatography and was able to promote both techniques within *Ciba-Geigy*. In 1980, he founded and headed the group ANALYTICAL RESEARCH, what

was to become one of the premier analytical research laboratories in industry and home to more than 100 graduate students, postdocs and coworkers during the 16 years until his formal retirement in 1996. Through his worldwide connections in the analytical community, he was able to attract talented postdocs from the top analytical schools and the place in Basel became a favorite laboratory for a sabbatical leave. Many of his friends would not miss the opportunity to stop by in Basel, when in Europe or crossing through Switzerland to give a lecture, making Analytical Research a fun place to work with lots of stimulating scientific discussions. During this time, *H. Michael Widmer* initiated a broad analytical research program covering separation techniques such as GC, LC, FFF and CE as well as mass spectrometry, FIA and biosensors. More than 270 publications in prestigious journals, successful commercialization of CE and MALDI-TOF and strong collaborations for biosensor technologies demonstrate his tremendous scientific productivity.

Starting in 1986, *H. Michael Widmer* wrote a monthly editorial on analytical issues, published in *CHIMIA*. He also found the time to found the section analytical chemistry (Sektion Analytische Chemie SACH) as a section of the New Swiss Chemical Society (NSCG) and served as its president from 1991. As the SACH president, he was instrumental in the initiation of the programs ACTIVE (Analytical Chemistry Turntable for Industrial Visits and Education), which got started within the COMETT program of Brussels in the beginning of 1992 with the goal to promote technology transfer between universities and industry. As the SACH president, he represented the Swiss analytical community with a never ending drive and enthusiasm for better recogni-

tion of the role of analytical chemistry within the industrial and educational environment. The improvement of analytical chemistry, especially in industry, from a retrospective tool of explanation to a predictive tool of directing chemical processes was very close to his heart. His was a vivid and passionate advocate of his field, serving on the scientific board of many respected journals. In 1992, he founded a new European Journal for Analytical Chemistry, *Analytical Methods and Instrumentation* (AMI), and served as its editor in chief.

*Mike*, as his many friends called him, coined the term  $\mu$ -TAS for miniaturized total analysis system to describe the research program which eventually led to integrated capillary electrophoresis with planar microfabricated chip elements. Only now, seven years after the research activities started at *Ciba-Geigy*, a worldwide interest emerges and a number of prominent groups and in the US a few start-up companies got involved in  $\mu$ -TAS. In November 1996, a few months after his official retirement from *Ciba-Geigy*, he single-handedly organized a successful  $\mu$ -TAS meeting in Basel, bringing together scientists from all continents to discuss the latest developments with miniaturized analytical systems.

His coworkers and friends, now all over the world, will miss his visionary mind and his vigor, defending and promoting excellence in analytical science.

Aran Paulus