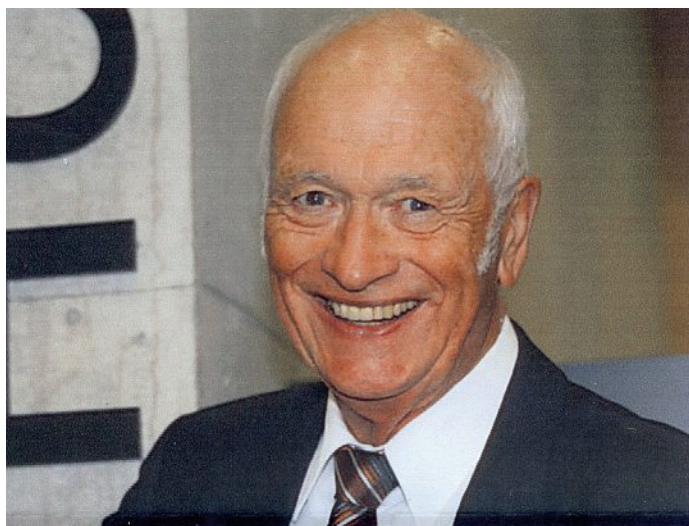


Obituary

Camille Ganter

(1934–2013)

Professor of the ETH Zürich, Editor of *Chimia*

Prof. Dr. **Camille Ganter** died at the age of 79 years on April 16, 2013. Born on April 27, 1934 in Zürich, he attended high school (Gymnasium) first in Zürich, later at the 'Kollegium Maria Hilf' in Schwyz. There his interest in mathematics and natural science was aroused, promoted by stimulating teachers. His talents in music and dramatic art were also encouraged in Schwyz. Between 1954 and 1958 he studied chemistry at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zürich, and subsequently became a graduate student in the research group of Prof. Dr. O. Jeger. In 1960 the unexpected death of his father forced him to abandon his PhD studies, and to manage the business of his father, a well-known sweets and candy factory named 'Ganterschleckwaren'. After roughly one year and a half he was able to resume his work in the laboratory, concluding 1963 with a PhD-thesis entitled 'Contribution to the understanding of photo-lytic rearrangements of cross conjugated cyclohexadienones'. At this time the structurally diverse products resulting from irradiation of 1-dehydro-testosterone acetate (Fig. 1) had to be separated and purified by alumina chromatography and crystallization and their structural elucidation relied on UV- and IR spectroscopy, elemental analysis combined with derivatization and chemical degradation.

The following three years Camille Ganter spent as post-doctoral fellow in the United States, first at Brandeis University in the Boston area with Prof. J. B. Hendrickson, then at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena with Prof. J. D. Roberts. There, at the frontiers of physical organic chemistry, he became acquainted with NMR spectroscopy, an emerging technology at that time. Back in Zürich he obtained a position as assistant professor (Oberassistent) in the 'Laboratorium für Organische Chemie der ETH-Zürich'. He earned his *venia legendi* (Habilitation) in 1974 with a thesis on dihetero-tricyclodecanes, *i.e.* dihetero-adamantanes, -isotwistanes, and -twistanes (Fig. 1). He was appointed adjunct professor in 1978. His official functions included teaching advanced laboratory courses for organic chemists. Later, and initially together with his colleague Prof. Dr. Reinhard Keese, he was in charge of initiating a new course of study – Chemie Ingenieur Studium –, lecturing organic

chemistry and guiding courses in practical lab work. He also headed an enthusiastic and fervent research group of graduate and postdoctoral students. Besides preparation and rearrangements of heterocyclic, later also carbacyclic, tricyclodecanes, -undecanes, and -dodecanes, his research interests were also directed to the synthesis of natural products within the pseudomonic acid family, and to mechanistic studies on the photolysis of saturated β -hetero-ketones, pyrolytic rearrangements of unsaturated sesquiterpenes, the conformation of bicyclo[3.3.1]nonanes and *cis*-decalines, the mechanism of iodo demercuration, and the nucleophilic addition of alcohol and amine functions to non-activated olefins. In collaboration with Profs. Klaus Müller, Rolf Gleiter, and W.V. Steele the observed effects and transformations were rationalized by photoelectron spectroscopy, *ab initio* calculations and thermodynamic studies. The result of his research was disclosed in over 90 papers and 26 PhD theses.

This journal – CHIMIA – is especially obliged to Prof. Camille Ganter, who for 16 years (1990–2006) very successfully acted as its main editor. This earned him the honorary membership of the Swiss Chemical Society in 2006. He was further honored with the *Silver Medal* of the ETH for his PhD thesis in 1963, with the *Alfred Werner prize* of the Swiss Chemical Society in 1973, the *Leopold Ruzicka prize* of the ETH Zürich in 1976, and with the gold medal (*Zlatu Medalu*) of the Slovakian Chemical Society in 1993.

Personally Camille Ganter was an excellent and committed mentor, a reliable and generous friend and colleague, who also enjoyed parties and social activities with his colleagues, coworkers, and friends. For us members of his laboratory he set an example of accuracy and quality of research. If he disliked anything, it was incorrectness and especially injustice.

Besides his scientific profession, Camille Ganter was engaged in numerous cultural and social activities, most prominently in music as a gifted bassoon player. Also thanks to his excellent

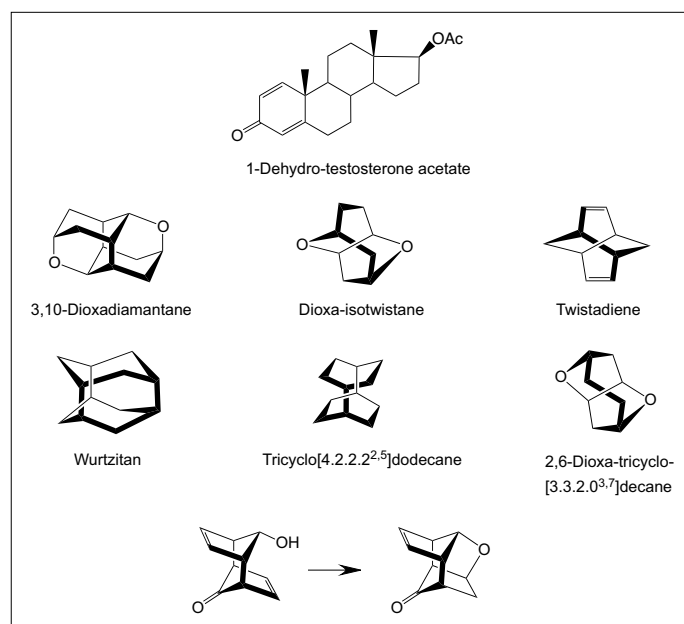


Fig. 1

teachers – Willi Burger and Ernest Panenka, both soloists in the *Tonhalle Orchester Zürich* and the *Boston Symphony*, respectively – he played as soloist, in chamber music ensembles, and in symphony orchestras on a professional level, and almost until his last days. He also performed traditional Swiss folkloristic music in original costumes, and with especially great success in the United States. As a member of the ‘Zunft zur Waage’ – in former times a classical trade union – he never missed the ‘Sechseläuten’, THE event of Zürich reaching back to medieval times. Closest to Camille, however, always was his family – Johanna Lobeck, his partner since 20 years, the children Regula, Christoph, and Michael with grandchildren Jonas, Simon, and Felix.

Rudolf O. Duthaler, Beat Ernst, Gerardo Ramos Tombo