

OBITUARY



HELMUT METZNER

15 September 1925 - 20 September 1999

*A year ago the Editorial Board of *Photosynthetica* lost one of its meritorious members who had been of valuable assistance from the very beginnings of the journal in 1967: Dr. rer. nat. Dr. h.c. Helmut Metzner, emeritus professor of chemical plant physiology at the University of Tübingen, Germany. This excellent scientist is greatly missed by the international photosynthetic community, and Czech researchers in photosynthesis lost a good friend who gave tremendous support, especially during the era of communist rule.*

*Helmut Metzner's research in photosynthesis was certainly influenced by his stay in Melvin Calvin's laboratory at the University of California in Berkeley in the late 50s. However, the scope of his scientific research was very broad. Many of his research papers were devoted to photosynthetic carbon cycles, electron transfer paths, water splitting and oxygen evolution, the energetics of photosynthetic processes, chlorophyll fluorescence, enzyme activities, and modelling of photosynthetic processes. He worked with isolated chloroplasts, thylakoids, and grana as well as with algae and photosynthetic bacteria. In his chlorophyll-coated model surfaces and in photosynthetic bacteria he determined fluorescence induction phenomena. His models even included the light-sensitive silver salts. As a devoted member of our Editorial Board he published several original papers in *Photosynthetica* dealing with his experiments in above mentioned topics. He also improved several methods of studying photosynthesis, e.g., manometry, Hill reaction, use of labelled substances, and elaborated new procedures of synchronising algal cultures and mass algae cultures, etc.*

In 1968 Helmut Metzner initiated and successfully organised the first International Congress of Photosynthesis that took place in Freudenstadt, Black Forest (Germany). It was a great achievement for the scientific community. This congress was the first international meeting of photosynthesis researchers from all over the world, and the first great congress in plant biology after the World War II. Many European scientists met there for the first time, and the congress became the starting point for international co-operation and exchange. The support and kindness of its main organiser enabled the participation of a great number of scientists from behind the Iron Curtain. Metzner also organised specialised international scientific symposia, e.g., in 1977 on photosynthetic oxygen evolution in Tübingen whose proceedings appeared in 1978 as the book "Photosynthetic Oxygen Evolution", published by Academic Press. In co-operation with H.K. Lichtenhaller he organised the international OECD Workshop "Photosynthesis and Biological Solar Energy Conversion" in Ettlingen in October 1981; as a result he edited the book "Photosynthesis and Plant Productivity" at Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft in 1983. Metzner acted not only as a thorough editor of proceedings of scientific meetings, but also as an editor of the journal Photobiochemistry and Photobiophysics published by Elsevier.

During the last 14 years of his rewarding life Helmut Metzner put much energy into launching (and keeping highly active) an international organisation of scientists, economists, and politicians: the "European Academy for Environmental Affairs" located in Tübingen, Germany. The main goal of this Academy with 90 members (I was happy to be one of them) was to disseminate correct information on environmental problems in various parts of the world, to prepare independent statements and expert information on actual environmental disasters, and to organise research on special topics connected with ecology. The Academy organised distance-learning courses by correspondence on health and environment related subjects and on the biological bases of ecology. A series of textbooks was published for these courses that made broad knowledge in topics, such as CO₂ and ozone enrichment, energy sources and use of solar energy, development of society and anthropogenic damage to nature, etc. accessible to a wide range of the population in Germany (about 15 000 participants). Important topics in the field of civilisation and human health were included. The Academy also published statements on various environmental crises, e.g., the atmospheric pollution during the Persian Gulf War. The original research projects included a computer based study of annual growth rings in wood as a method of testing forest damage, biological rehabilitation of soils polluted by oil, etc. The Academy arranged many lectures, excursions, and ecological courses to various parts of Germany. Helmut Metzner organised special international meetings on current topics, such as soil pollution and decontamination, the greenhouse controversy, the ozone problem and global warming. His scientific work and environmental involvement was highly appreciated, not only in Germany but also on an international level. In 1992 he received from the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic the Gregor Mendel gold medal for his merits in biological sciences.

Finally I would like to point out that Helmut Metzner was not only an excellent scientist and organiser, but also a very kind, pleasant, and extremely co-operative person who had a broad interest in culture. He was a man who supported scientists all over the world and in addition gave his support to everybody who needed it. I am very happy to have known him and to have stayed in close contact with him.

Zdeněk ŠESTÁK (Praha)