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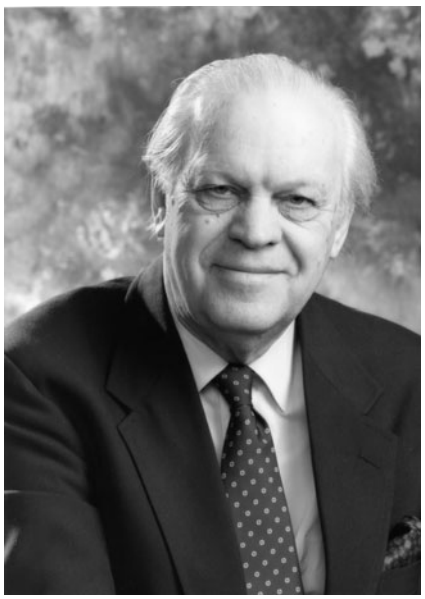
Editorial

Leslie Stephen Ettre 1922–2010



Chromatographia is sad to report the death of Leslie Ettre on the 1st of June. Leslie was born in Hungary on September 16th 1922 and graduated in chemical engineering at the Technical University of Budapest in 1945. These statements, gloss over the facts that Leslie was born into an era of great political upheaval soon after the end of the Austro–Hungarian Empire and graduated at the end of the Second World War in a country situated firmly behind the Iron Curtain. Those born in more recent and peaceful times may have difficulty in appreciating just how difficult life was in Europe in those far off times where only the ablest (and luckiest) could thrive. On the other hand, in the words of Charles Dickens "It was the best of times and the worst of times", a world in which analytical chemistry was changing fundamentally from classical methods to instrumental techniques. Reading again Leslie's contribution to "75 Years of Chromatography" [1] I was struck how, like myself, he was precipitated into this new era when it was assumed that someone with a good grounding in chemistry, physics and maths could tackle just about everything from glassblowing to electronics. He moved to Germany after the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 and after a year in Frankfurt moved to the USA where he spent the rest of his life, mainly in the employ of the Perkin Elmer Company.

Leslie was a polymath whose life was split into a number of separate but interlinked compartments—original scientist, scientific author, historian and communicator. A list of his many scientific interests and awards is given in the article in Chromatographia in honour of his 80th birthday in 2002 written by the late Csaba Horváth [2]. In his scientific work he was fortunate to have the collaboration of many able colleagues in Perkin Elmer, and with Professor Albert Zlatkis and his associates at the University of Houston. His work as an author is exemplified by his co-authored book on "Basic Relationships in Chromatography" and in particular the one on "Static Headspace Gas Chromatography" which is a tour de force on the subject.

If Leslie had not been a scientist I am sure he would have been happy to have been an historian. Thanks to the enormous effort he put into a series of papers (many published in Chromatographia) we have the most complete record of the development of chromatography from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and, in particular, the life and work of Michael Tswett.

Coming from a European background where the International Symposium series had been established in 1956 he and Zlatkis realised the need for an equivalent organisation in the USA and together they instituted the series of Advances in Chromatography meetings which did much to forward the development of separation science in the USA over many years. Another example of his efforts as a communicator is his articles on the Kováts Retention Index system. Kováts originally published his system in German in a Swiss journal but it was Leslie's article in Analytical Chemistry that ensured its wider recognition. It must also be pointed out that he was largely responsible for the IUPAC recommendations on chromatographic nomenclature. He was one of the

first editors of this journal and still acted in an advisory capacity.

I had not met Leslie in the flesh for over 20 years but communicated with him frequently and always found him an interesting and stimulating correspondent. Reading over what I have written I feel a total inadequacy to do justice to the talents of a remarkable Renaissance man and to express my sense of loss at his departure. It was a pleasure and privilege to have known him.

Ted Adlard

References

1. Ettre LS, Zlatkis A (1979) 75 years of chromatography: a historical dialogue. Elsevier, Amsterdam
2. Chromatographia (2002) 56:257–260. doi: 10.1007/BF02491927