

NEWS

In memoriam Prof. Dr. Peter Roland

Prof. Peter died unexpectedly on March 8th 2010, a few days before his 70th birthday. Although he had officially retired at the age of 65, as is usual in Austria, he still gave lectures on cell and evolutionary biology and continued his research on neoblasts of freshwater flatworms. The cultures of his model animals have been transferred to a lab at the zoological department of the University of Innsbruck. In the last ten years Prof. Peter has initiated fruitful cooperation with our colleagues from Innsbruck.

Prof. Peter was born in 1940 in Vienna and after school and gymnasium he began to study chemistry, zoology and botany at the University of Vienna. I met him first at the zoology department where he worked on his PhD thesis; a discrimination of flatworm species by disc-electrophoresis. He was a true pioneer in this new technique and most of the equipment he had to build himself. We became friends from that time and we both worked at the University of Salzburg where the study of natural sciences had begun in 1968. The department of genetics and developmental biology was founded there in 1971 and Dr. Peter began as assistant professor under Prof. Gerhard Czihak in 1972, also the year in which he married his wife Hedwig, a high school teacher in physics and mathematics. In addition to ongoing

research and teaching, our energy was consumed by planning, accomplishing and adapting our labs and offices. He had to diversify his research according to the different and changing topics of his department, a situation neither successful nor satisfactory to him. His best and most fruitful period began with research cooperation with Prof. Reinhard Rieger, an excellent EM morphologist and world known flatworm specialist at the University of Innsbruck. Roland was also active in a variety of academic panels.

In his private life he was a true “polyhistor” highly interested in ancient cultures mainly of the Mediterranean and the Near East and he loved classical music which gave him energy and consolation. Despite being an experimental and analytical working natural scientist he retained the ability to look at the world and the life of nature as a real wonder; due no doubt to his deep believe in religion. The scientific community has lost with his death a valuable member, and I a good friend.

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