



NEWSLETTER

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On December 17, Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. **Wolfgang Flaig** celebrated his 90th birthday. He grew up in Freiburg, Germany, where he attended school and studied chemistry at the University. As research assistant he moved to the Universität Würzburg, where he obtained his PhD. Following his special interest in macromolecular chemistry, he joined the group of Karl Ziegler, later Nobel Prize laureat at the Universität Halle, and finished his habilitation on the reactions of crotonaldehyds in 1944. Back in those days, Wolfgang Flaig also got infected by the fascination of the chemistry of soil organic matter. This infection even survived the chaos of the end of World War II. So, when life returned to normal again, Wolfgang Flaig joined his mentor Ziegler at the Max-Planck Institut for Carbon Research in Mülheim/Ruhr. In 1948, he took his most important step into soil science by becoming Director of an institute for humus investigations in the newly established Research Centre for Agriculture in Braunschweig. Under his leadership, the institute grew and became world renowned for its modern approach to the biochemistry of soil. More than 250 papers on the formation, structure and function of humic and fulvic acids, including their physiological effects on plants, bear the name of Wolfgang Flaig. About 30 PhD students and many international visitors joined the laboratories and experimental fields in Braunschweig. Due to his broad scientific view centred around chemistry, his devotion to teaching and his great management skills, Wolfgang Flaig served as President of the Agricultural Research Centre for several years and in 1961 he was appointed Professor at the Technische Universität Braunschweig. He also served on the boards of the German and International Soil Science Societies and the Peat and Peloids Societies. His engagement in international cooperations led to a number of highly renowned appointments as fellow of several Academies of Science and research organizations. In 1978, he was awarded the honorary doctorate of the Catholic University of Leuven / Belgium. Several Soil Science Societies awarded him the honorary membership, which he also obtained from the IHSS at the Birmingham Conference in 1984.



Wolfgang Flaig amongst other humic researchers at the Dahlem Conference 19

In addition to all his scientific merits, Wolfgang Flaig's personality needs to be particularly mentioned. He is an honest, open minded scientist, optimistic also in difficult situations and he always enjoys company. Even now, when nature begins to show us that strength is not unlimited, he continues to offer his charm and fine sense of humour to his friends and the people around him.

We congratulate Wolfgang Flaig dearly to his birthday and wish him all the best.

Fritz H. Frimmel