

OBITUARY

Hans Georg Trüper (1936–2016)

Bernhard Schink*

Fachbereich Biologie, Universitaet Konstanz, D-78457 Konstanz, Universitaetsstr. 10

*Corresponding author: Fachbereich Biologie, Universitaet Konstanz, D-78457 Konstanz, Universitaetsstr. 10. Tel: +49-7531-882140; Fax: +49-7531-884047; E-mail: Bernhard.Schink@uni-konstanz.de

Hans Georg Trüper, former president of FEMS, passed away quite unexpectedly on March 9, 2016, just one week before his 80th birthday.

Born in 1936, in a village close to the Northern German trading town Bremen, Hans grew up in the traditions of classical German education, combined with the open mind of a seaport town. After finishing high school, he studied biology at the University of Marburg and discovered his first scientific love in botany. He moved to the University of Göttingen and met the microbiologist Hans Günther Schlegel at the renowned Microbiology Institute. He, and later Norbert Pfennig, inspired him to study the anoxygenic phototrophic bacteria, their physiology, biochemistry, and ecology, which provided the basis for his doctoral thesis (1964) and, after postdoc research with Holger Jannasch in Woods Hole, Mass., and Harry Peck in Georgia, USA, his habilitation in 1971. Soon after, he became chair of the newly established Institute for Microbiology at the University of Bonn that he would later expand to a Center of Microbiology and Biotechnology, combined with the microbiology chairs of Agriculture and Food Sciences. His scientific achievements are documented in more than 200 original publications dealing with various aspects of photo- and chemotrophic bacteria, the metabolism of sulfur compounds, and the adaptation of microbes to high salt concentration.

His profound interest and knowledge in cultural history, his excellent organizational talent and his extreme assiduity enabled him to run, in parallel with his job as a Department Chair, a complete study programme in history that he finished with a doctoral degree (Dr. phil.) in 1998 and a thesis on the late medieval history of his home town Bremen. His numerous achievements in microbiology and his personal links to the town of Bremen led the University of Bremen to award him an honorary doctoral degree in 2002. He was a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen, a fellow of the local academy "Witheit" in Bremen and an honorary fellow of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem. His excellent background in Classical Latin



and Old Greek initiated his interest in bacterial taxonomy and nomenclature in which he was engaged for many decades as a competent advisor for naming newly isolated bacteria. He was a member of the International Commission on Systematics of Prokaryotes and the Judicial Commission on bacterial taxonomy for many years and was awarded the Bergey Medal in 1999.

Hans represented the German Association for General and Applied Microbiology (VAAM) since 1986 within FEMS and IUMS and became Member at Large, later Vice President (1998–2001) and President of FEMS (2001–2004). His cordial style of personal interaction, combined with an impressive talent for languages, made him a highly appreciated partner in all discussions on science and science politics. He was a highly respected president who, due to his diplomatic talent, steered the FEMS ship very successfully through some waves arising in those days. Together

with his wife Erika, he attended nearly all FEMS meetings and congresses during the past twenty years, despite some health problems that they both experienced. The VAAM awarded him honorary membership in 2008. Quite unexpectedly, Erika Trüper

died a few days before Christmas 2015 due to a sudden heart attack. Hans followed her less than three months later after a long happy family life together. The Trüpers are survived by two sons and one grandson living in the area of Bonn, Germany.