

## In memory of Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Selke

The Leibniz Institute for Catalysis mourns the death of Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Selke. As the family announced, our long-time colleague passed away last week at the age of 87.



In Liebe und Dankbarkeit nehmen wir Abschied von

**Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Selke**

\* 23.06.1934 † 09.11.2021

In stiller Trauer  
Deine Heidrun  
Kerstin und Matthias  
Antje und Wilfried (Hacki)  
Hanno und Ulli  
und alle Enkel und Urenkel

Die Trauerfeier mit anschließender Urnenbeisetzung findet am 9. Dezember 2021 um 9.00 Uhr in der Feierhalle 1 auf dem Neuen Friedhof Rostock statt.

## Memories of Rüdiger Selke

Rüdiger Selke's career as a chemist began with Wolfgang Langenbeck in Halle an der Saale. At that time, Langenbeck, a pioneer of organocatalysis, had written a textbook on organic chemistry, which included a special chapter on catalysis. In doing so, he wanted to draw attention to the importance of this new field of research. During his doctoral studies, Selke found that transition metal ions can positively influence certain reactions, a finding that contributed to the later focus of Rostock chemistry on transition metal catalyses. Langenbeck was able to establish an Institute for Organic Catalysis Research in Rostock, the first of its kind in Europe. After his death, the institute was taken over by Horst Pracejus, who focused even more on catalysis with transition metal complexes. Rüdiger Selke was actively involved in this development. After the political change in 1989, two Max Planck Society working groups were established at the Rostock institute, one of which was headed by Selke. The institute was taken over by the University of Rostock as an affiliated institute under the direction of Günther Oehme, and the MPG working groups were reintegrated after five years. At the same time, Rüdiger Selke was appointed professor at the university. Collaboration with young staff members has resulted in internationally acclaimed work. While the GDR was still in power, Rüdiger Selke almost single-handedly developed a rhodium-catalyzed asymmetric hydrogenation to the antiparkinsonian drug L-dopa on an industrial scale together with VEB ISIS-Chemie Zwickau, supported only by his laboratory assistant Heidi Burneleit. This was the first industrial application of asymmetric catalysis in Europe and the second worldwide. The first application in the USA by W. S. Knowles was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2001, whereas the work of Rüdiger Selke did not receive the recognition it deserved until after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This achievement was certainly an essential scientific building block that the small Rostock institute was not closed in the turmoil of the post-reunification period and that LIKAT was able to develop in its present form.

Prof. Dr. Günther Oehme (with the collaboration of Prof. Dr. Armin Börner)