

Professor Heino Nitsche (1949 – 2014)



With deep sorrow the scientific community has heard about the unexpected death of Professor Heino Nitsche, member of the Editorial Board of “Nukleonika”. He passed away peacefully in Oakland (USA) on July 15, 2014, a few days to his 65th birthday.

Born in Munich, Germany, he graduated (1976) and obtained his PhD in chemistry (1980) from the Free University of Berlin. Heino’s engagement in nuclear chemistry made possible his appointment as a staff scientist at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, University of California, which lasted 13 years. His research focused on the environmental chemistry of actinides and then on the new transactinide elements. In 1993, Nitsche returned to the reunified Germany, where he became the head of the Institute of Radiochemistry, Dresden-Rossendorf Research Center, and the professor of radiochemistry at the Dresden University of Technology.

In 1998, Heino returned to Berkeley by an offer to become a full professor in the Department of Chemistry, University of California, a Faculty Senior Scientist at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, and the founding director of LBNL’s Glenn T. Seaborg Center. At LBNL, he continued his research on the heaviest elements. Along with collaborators at LBNL and Europe, he confirmed the existence of element 114. Recently, during his travel to the GSI Helmholtz Center for Heavy Ion Research in Darmstadt, Germany, he helped confirm the existence of element 117.

Professor Heino Nitsche was a world-renowned and accomplished scientist in actinides. In 2014, he was awarded with the Hevesy Medal, the premier international award of excellence, honoring outstanding achievements in radioanalytical and nuclear chemistry. It was my great pleasure and real satisfaction to take part in the award ceremony a few months ago, during the Radiochemical Conference in Mariánské Lázně, Czech Republic (May 2014), and to congratulate Heino in person. Now, we are sending our prayers and condolences to the Nitsche family. All Heino’s friends and colleagues moved by his untimely death are sorely missing him.

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