



Oskar E. Polansky

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OSKAR POLANSKY AND MATCH

It is the sad duty of the Undersigned to inform our readers of the passing away of *Prof. Dr. Oskar E. Polansky*, the chief Founder and Editor of this journal, MATCH, Communications in Mathematical Chemistry; he died in Vienna on January 15, 1989.

The Curriculum Vitae. - Oskar Polansky was born on March 28, 1919 in Vienna. After receiving his Ph.D. (preparative organic chemistry) with Prof. Dr. F. Wessely of the University of Vienna in 1957 (studies interrupted by war), he habilitated there in 1965 and served as the first Professor of the newly founded Institute for Theoretical Chemistry in Vienna from 1967 to 1973. Since 1965 he also was a regular part-time guest in Prof. Dr. Günther O. Schenck's Radiation Department of the Max-Planck-Institute for Carbon Research in Mülheim. In 1968 Prof. Polansky (together with Prof. Dr. Günther Wilke) took over the *ad interim* responsibility for the Mülheim Department, this in addition to his duties in Vienna. In 1973 Prof. Polansky resigned from the University of Vienna and concentrated his efforts on what had in the meantime become the Max-Planck-Institute for Radiation Chemistry, where he was a member of the Directorium (together with Prof. Dr. Dietrich Schulte-Frohlinde and later also with Prof. Dr. Kurt Schaffner) until his retirement in 1987.

This is not the place to present a general review of Prof. Polansky's scientific contributions (we refer the reader to the article by Prof. Dr. M. Zander, *Schriftenreihe des Max-Planck-Instituts für Strahlenchemie*, Nr. 34). Suffice it to mention here that his work was primarily in the fields of physical organic, spectroscopic and theoretical chemistry and that it contributed fundamentally to the understanding of thermal and photolytic processes in organic systems.

Mathematical Chemistry. - Of interest in the present connection are his attempts to formulate simple model concepts for molecular ground and excited states, because it was this effort which led him to appreciate the importance of mathematical concepts for chemistry. This was particularly the case when he found that unsaturated structures could be classified by their nearest neighborhood relations (a topology) and that certain theorems of graph theory turned out to be useful.

An expression of this mathematical interest was the *Microsymposium on Graph Theory in Chemistry*, which Prof. Polansky organized at the Mülheim Institute in May 1975. This pioneering meeting, which gathered different types of chemists and also some mathematicians, found a considerable echo. The participants (about 35) sensed the present and potentially growing interest in this border line discipline. They also deplored the absence of a special publication medium in this field. Several

mentioned their painful experiences with the submission of mathematico-chemical manuscripts to conventional journals: Chemical editors referred them to a mathematical journal and mathematical editors to a chemical journal.

In a final session, the conference participants suggested that the gap be filled by creating a new publication medium. Since there was no certainty about the future needs in this developing field it appeared advisable to refrain - for the time being - from organizational rigidity, both as to the frequency of issues and the form of manuscripts. This was the hour of birth of a new journal; Prof. Dr. Adalbert Kerber already had a name for it: *MATCH, Informal Communications in Mathematical Chemistry*. But the actual coming out of MATCH in full splendor was prepared by Prof. Polansky. He was able to muster the facilities of the Mülheim Radiation Institute, where he obtained the cooperation of Dr. H. J. Kuhn (editing and printing), Mrs. I. Schneider (design and graphics) and Mrss. A. Bock and R. Constantinescu (secretarial work).

The Debut of MATCH. - Only five months later, in October 1975, the first issue of MATCH was printed. It contained the proceedings of the above mentioned Mülheim Microsymposium. But it also contained some remarks by Prof. Polansky which illustrated his involvement in the future of this new border line discipline. He understood the word '*match*' not only as Kerber's abbreviation for *mathematical chemistry* but also as a

stimulating omen for 'comparison' and 'competition'. MATCH was to have the informal character of 'letters' to facilitate the flow of information. Depending on the actual needs, it would publish all sorts of articles, from preliminary communications over letters, proceedings and full papers to reviews.

Indeed, this first issue was followed by many other MATCH issues (1 - 3 per year) of different sizes (170 - 370 pages). They contained articles of authors from all over the world, covering a wide range of subjects in the field. MATCH also invited guest editors to publish certain conference proceedings. Thus Prof. Dr. Peter J. Plath documented the 'Bremen Conference for Chemistry' and Proff. Drs. Andreas W. M. Dress and Joachim Neubüser reported on the 'Conference on Crystallographic Groups' at the ZiF in Bielefeld. All these articles had to pass the critical scrutiny of Prof. Polansky, the guest editors or the referees. From the second issue onward, Mrs. R. Wolf had taken over the secretariat with an ever growing range of tasks.

The Future. - MATCH clearly meets a need both in the chemical and in the mathematical community. For this reason, in 1980, the attribute 'informal' was dropped out of the title. A continuous flow of important contributions and a faithful circle of readers attests to the solid place, which MATCH occupies on the shelf of scientific journals. This is largely due to the personal engagement of Mrs. Wolf and the generous support by the Max-

Planck-Institute for Radiation Chemistry, which assured that MATCH has always appeared so promptly and in such an attractive form. But the major credit must go to Prof. Polansky who bore the most important responsibilities, the ones for the scientific quality and for the financial backbone. Polansky was 'Mr. MATCH'; he will be missed. But, in his honor and as a service to the new discipline he helped to pioneer, the Undersigned - together with an expanded editorial board - intend to insure that MATCH will continue in the 'Polansky spirit'.

A. T. Balaban

A. S. Dreiding

A. Kerber

