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Preface

Cornelis Martin Lok—A lifetime in science

Cornelis M. Lok, Martin, began his career in industry at Unilever's Vlaardingen Laboratory in The Netherlands and completed it, over 35 years later, when he retired from the Johnson Matthey Technology Centre in the UK. In the intervening years Martin worked at Emmerich in Germany and Unilever's Port-Sunlight Laboratories in the UK before joining ICI's catalyst business, Katalco, at Billingham, also in the UK.

Martin's early career built on his expertise in organic chemistry developed during his PhD at the University of Leiden that was entitled "Photo-substitution reactions of azulene and naphthalene derivatives". His initial assignments included work on the composition, and characterisation, of various natural products from whale oil to cobra venom! It is said that those skilled in organic synthesis can turn their hands to any area of chemistry and following a period working on detergent products Martin "saw the light" (!) and converted to the world of catalysis.

Martin's first role was as head-of-laboratory at the Emmerich production facility in Germany that specialised in the development of catalysts for the hydrogenation of edible oils and oleochemicals. The move to Port-Sunlight in the UK also involved a change in focus to hydrotreating catalysis. The acquisition of the Unilever speciality businesses brought Martin to ICI and the north east of England where he was Technology Manager for the Polymers, Chemicals and Edible Oils business.

The call of more fundamental research however brought Martin to the Discovery Group of the ICI Synetix catalyst business, where he was appointed to the position of Research Fellow (the highest technical position within that business). The acquisition of ICI's catalyst business by Johnson Matthey brought Martin to his final role and back to corporate research within the Johnson Matthey Technology Centre.

Since his "retirement" from industry, Martin has continued to pursue his vocation in science through consultancy work and in various advisory roles such as with NIOK in The Netherlands.

The paper (in ibid) by a former colleague, Dr. Wicher Koetsier, describes Martin's contributions in the area of hydrogenation catalysis while others in this issue reflect his other interests in catalysis. These papers reference Martin's many patents and technical publications. However, as a scientist working in industry, Martin's contribution cannot be measured solely by the quality of his papers or number of patents but by those patented inventions that have been commercialised. Martin has the enviable record of having taken to commercialisation products and/or processes within every business that he was worked and at every stage of his career.

Throughout his career Martin has sought to "put something back" into the scientific community by acting as a committee member to various groups both in The Netherlands and in the UK including the Dutch Catalysis Society (KNCV), where Martin was a former chairman, and the Applied Catalysis Group of The Royal Society of Chemistry.

The title of this piece refers to Martin's career in science referring to his time in industry. However, those who have been fortunate enough to work with him realise that Martin's passion for science extends far beyond his career. His passion for the natural world in general and ornithology in particular is well known to colleagues, although perhaps not so well known are his numerous publications on avian migration! Perhaps a more fitting title would have been a "life devoted to science"!

It is therefore fitting that we dedicate this special edition of Catalysis Today to a true polymath, a man who has demonstrated a broad span of scientific pursuits contributing to both the generation of fundamental understanding and the delivery of commercial products and processes.

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