Prof. Dr. Ferdinand Sommer 65 years

A t 28-4-2006 Prof. Dr. F. Sommer reaches the age of 65 years and, accordingly will have to retire from official duty. As a tribute to him, in recognition of a long, outstanding service in the field of physical metallurgy, this issue of Zeitschrift für Metallkunde (edited by C. Bos and E. J. Mittemeijer) is devoted to him.

The corner stones of his career can be summarized as follows. After primary school and gymnasium in Osnabrück, where he was born, Sommer studied physics at the Westfälische Wilhelms-University in Münster, where, as one could say, the academic education was completed in 1973 with a Ph.D. dissertation on calorimetric measurements and modelling of enthalpies of mixing of some liquids, with Prof. B. Predel as his promoter. Herewith the field of science, from now on laboured by Sommer, has already been indicated: the thermodynamics of materials. In the same year Prof. Predel moved to the Max Planck Institute for Metals Research in Stuttgart and was followed by, also, Sommer. After his habilitation in 1983, Sommer was granted the title extraordinary Professor in 1989. The only major change happening thereafter was the retirement of Prof. Predel in 1996 and my arrival in Stuttgart in 1998 as Sommer's new "boss".

Sommer has published more than 250 papers in the international literature through the years. Since before 1998 most of his best known work has been devoted to the thermodynamics of amorphous and liquid alloys, which, not



surprisingly, well fitted to the research field "constitution of alloys" representing the core interest of Prof. Predel. Sommer is a gifted experimentalist, but also has contributed significantly to the thermodynamic modelling of these materials. Here in particular his "association" model of liquids should be mentioned. Thus he became an often cited scientist.

Prof. Sommer has a pleasant personality and a flexible attitude. Thus he was capable to adapt himself to the new research field introduced by me, where the driving forces and the kinetics of phase transformations have become a focal point of interest. On the basis of ample experience I can state that it is does not go without saying that a mature scientist is willing to change course upon arrival of a new research leader. The cooperation with Prof. Sommer that I experienced since 1998 was very successful. The success in our research on particularly the kinetics of phase transformations was especially possible because of the shared joy in scientific work. The Ph.D. students, post-docs and guest scientists that have worked with us have profited enormously of this atmosphere and cooperation.

I regret that Prof. Sommer has to leave my department. We all wish him a long retirement in good health and hope to see him now and then in the institute.

Prof. Dr. Ir. Eric J. Mittemeijer Stuttgart, January 2006