



## **ESB Newsletter September 25, 2019 – Dr. Günther Heimke Obituary**

Dear colleagues,

We received the sad news of the passing away of Dr. Günther Heimke (\*07.02.1922 in Berlin - †19.08.2019 in Kiel), one of the founders of our society. Professor Paul Ducheyne, who served on the council together with Dr. Heimke, has kindly written the following brief obituary:

### **Dr. Günther Heimke, ESB President 1981-1983 passed away**

Dr. Günther Heimke, the third president of the ESB, passed away on August 19 in Kiel, Germany, at the age of 97 years. He succeeded Dr. Jean Leray, who shortly before died in an avalanche in the Alps. Before, he had been Treasurer from about the founding of the ESB (1976) until his election as president.

Dr. Heimke was born in Berlin in 1922, survived the war, and pursued studies of physics at the Martin Luther Universität, Halle-Wittenberg. This University was located in the former Eastern-Germany, close to Leipzig. Before the wall was built, he moved to West-Germany and developed an outstanding career in the German industry that was being rebuilt in the post-war years. He worked in high tech ceramics at Friedrichsfeld and it is there that he developed his interest in biomaterials.

Dr. Sam Hulbert, one of the Founders of the US based Society for Biomaterials, worked on porous alumina in the early sixties. This work elicited the interest of three high tech ceramics companies in Europe, one in France and two in Germany. It was at Friedrichsfeld, Mannheim, that Dr. Heimke directed the program to develop alumina as an artificial bearing material in total joint replacements (heads and acetabular components of total hip joint prostheses first). In this capacity he was a colleague and collaborator of Professor Peter Griss, who moved from Mannheim to the Philipps Universität, Marburg, Germany, when appointed its Professor and Chairman of Orthopaedic Surgery.

Frialit, the separate division for oxide ceramics was created within Friedrichsfeld, in the seventies, and Friedrichsfeld was renamed Friatec in 1992.

It was not before long that Dr. Heimke also turned his attention to dental implants that incorporated alumina. Dr. Heimke was one of the pioneers involved in the development of the first dental implants systems in Germany and Europe in the seventies and eighties. He was closely associated with the Special Research Center for Dental Implantology at the Dental School of the University of Tübingen (A German Research Foundation supported program). As such, Dr. Heimke contributed in a major way to the success of the Frialit I Tübingen alumina immediate implants for front teeth replacement. All Frialit products are part of the Dentsply catalogue nowadays.

When Dr. Heimke retired from Friedrichsfeld he joined the Bioengineering faculty at Clemson University and continued to inspire young minds. When, eventually, he really retired, he liked being in his beloved Casa Fascino Magnetico in Magadino, on the Swiss side of Lago Maggiore. His life was a life well lived.

We offer the family of our past president our sincere condolences with his passing.



ESB Council Meeting, Leuven, 1978. Dr. Günther Heimke is the 4<sup>th</sup> from the left standing next to Prof. Paul Ducheyne (5<sup>th</sup> from the left).