

Obituary for Dr. Dieter Bonnet, Becquerel Prize 2006

Dieter Bonnet died on November 29th, 2016, in a nursing home in Bad Homburg close to his home near Frankfurt.

Dr. Dieter Bonnet † (27.05.1937 – 29.11.2016)



Dieter Bonnet was born in 1937 in Stuttgart, Germany. He has obtained his Master's degree at University of Frankfurt in 1961 and his PhD at Frankfurt University in 1963 on photoelectric properties of organic materials.

Dr. Dieter Bonnet started his professional career in 1965 at the Battelle Institute in Frankfurt/Germany, where he soon became head of the solid state physics department. He dedicated many years to R&D in the field of solar photovoltaic thin film cells where he contributed especially to CdSe, CdS and CdTe since 1968. In 1970, he developed the world's first CdTe/CdS thin-film solar cells in the presently known configuration and in 1972 this cell had an AMO efficiency of 6%.

Dieter Bonnet is one of the pioneers of solar cells from II-VI compounds. From the 1960s onwards he was one of Europe's leaders in this field and did not vacillate when the world's PV policy was less supportive. Today's commercial successes of thin film solar technique prove him right. When in 1993 the Battelle Institute was closed down Dieter Bonnet together with other employees initiated a buyout from the institute and so became a co-founder and shareholder of ANTEC GmbH, out of which grew the solar firm ANTEC-Solar in Arnstadt, Thuringia. As head of the Solar Energy Department of ANTEC Dieter Bonnet continued the development of the CdTe technology and brought it to mass production maturity. This enabled ANTEC Solar 2001 to start the operation of the worldwide first commercial CdTe thin film solar production.

In June 2001 the city council of Arnstadt honored his merits on the building up the first solar factory in Arnstadt by naming a street "Dr.-Bonnet-Weg". Later numerous solar companies followed the example of ANTEC Solar and settled in Arnstadt.

In his time with ANTEC Dieter Bonnet joined together the European scientific CdTe community and became coordinator of several European CdTe research projects funded by the commission of the EU. He has initiated SOLARPACT, a global network that connects research groups and industrial units to promote the technology of photovoltaic modules based on CdTe and related components in view of a cost-competitive mass production.

In 2006 the Commission of the EU expressed its recognition to Dieter Bonnet for his

achievements in the field photovoltaic energy by awarding to him the renowned Becquerel Prize.

Even after his retirement he did not rest but was active like before. So he supported as an advisor the creation of CTF Solar as the successor company of the ANTEC group. As long as his health allowed he shared the daily business of CTF Solar on CdTe technology research and production factory engineering. His ideas and his advice were asked by scientists and engineers as well. He further was still active in consulting European and American research groups.

Beside this professional life Dieter Bonnet was a creative artist. In painting he tried different styles from acyl painting up to computer graphics, from objective to abstract. But whatever style he tried his paintings were of high artistic and esthetic quality as different public exhibitions of his paintings prove.

We all knew Dieter Bonnet as a very agile and brisk man, fighting with enthusiasm for his persuasions, sparkling of ideas, but at the same time always serious and deliberate. End of 2009 he was fallen ill and he never recovered from this illness again which nearly completely deprived him of moving his extremities. So for the last seven years of his life he was bound to a wheelchair, sitting in a small room in a nursing home.

We always will remember Dieter Bonnet as he was in his active days. We always will keep in mind his great merits on helping the photovoltaic energy to its break through as well as his merits on the companies he accompanied with his advices.

Michael Harr, December 2016