

Notes from times gone by.

Experiences that remain now only as memories.

My stay in the Toennies group 1977 – 1980.

Dear Peter,

in honour of the occasion of your 95'th birthday I would like to share with you a non-serious, sometimes cheeky and impertinent, but by no means, disrespectful jog down memory lane, with anecdotes from and about those people who had the dubious pleasure of sharing their time with me there in the late 1970's. It's in the form of small notes.

Perhaps, hopefully, you will be able to relate to some of these anecdotes, and a smile may then appear on your face as well; I hope so. Others will hopefully excuse me if some people don't get a mention; I didn't have equal contact with all of you, so I can only relate to events of particular relevance/connection to/with me.

It's all in no particular order, neither chronological nor thematic. A lot of it is flippant, and not meant to be hurtful or disrespectful to anyone in any way, least of all to you, Peter "der Chef" (be warned).

+++++

- For me as a fresh post doc from Australia in July of 1977 it was a new experience, a strange (!) land with a foreign language (although I did have some prior school knowledge of German beforehand). I learnt about the "per Du" and "per Sie" idiosyncracies of the language – everybody was "per Du" in the group, except for one technician and, strangely, one student (obviously the boss was always "per Sie").
- Student life in Göttingen was new to me. I remember in a pub (Zum Altdeutschen, I know some of you will remember it) I once asked a student behind the bar: "Könnten Sie mir bitte zwei Bier geben?" I will never forget the look on his face. I learnt quickly.
- Lunch together was at 12 noon with about 10 people in the canteen, with coffee afterwards, which one person would get for all. Then a smaller group went on a stroll around the DLR/MPI area before heading back to work.
- The joy of after lunch finding small notes on the table, usually addressed, in my case, to "L. H. B.,..." and signed „T“.
- The "Toennies Rundgang" at 2 pm (after lunch) was famous; others in their reminiscences have already remarked on your cheery greeting: "Stimmung gut?"
- The group seminar was always on Fridays at 4 pm; supposedly at this time (according to naughty tongues) to keep people from heading home to an early weekend? Surely not...?
- No-one was "spared" from this seminar; in one case when Prof. (then Dr) Ottinger was missing, one of us was sent up to fetch him.

- Wichteln on Nikolaustag in December; here one bought a gift for some colleague, without him/her knowing from whom it was, and also wrote a small poem about the person. It was a good chance to let off steam or make jokes.
- We went on walks in Göttingen, often with some restaurant as a goal (I remember Italia in Grone). On one occasion we went Kegeln; for some reason the manager came over and grabbed you by the ear, as if to scold you for some break in etiquette rules in Kegeln which you had apparently infringed upon. I never worked out why. It was a shock to see this.
- My personal colleagues: Klaus Winkelmann and Rüdiger Götting. I well remember those long nights when measurements were carried out; I usually had the graveyard shift from midnight to 6 am. The experiment was only over when the liquid helium ran out, around 10 am the following day.
- For these measurements, you would often come by late at night to see how it was going and to support us; you once brought a pineapple with you, and once invited us to pizza. You also liked to be involved, which I can now fully understand: we had the so-called "Toennies dial", with which the frequency of the random chopper had to be trimmed by hand (the automatic controls didn't work properly at that stage), a chore that was lovingly carried out by you. It was a most useful support.
- I still maintained contact with Klaus after 1980 (I left for Canada) when he was in USA (at IBM on the Hudson River in upstate New York) and I was at the University of Toronto.
- Whilst at the University of Toronto I also had contact with Howard Mayne (a semi-classical theoretician and Kamikaze football player – see later), who was also there, but in a different group (Polanyi). We used to play tennis and bridge together in Toronto, indeed as we had also done in Göttingen.
- I had a special connection with the technician Josef Engelke and he usually (!) looked after me, me being the new boy (I also visited him at his home close to the East German border, a strangely eerie feeling in those days). At one group dinner somewhere south at a castle I asked him what local wine I should get, and he suggested Gänsewein. Stupidly I asked the waiter for Gänsewein, and he gave me a look of utter disdain. I learnt later that Gänsewein is in fact just water (apparently also called Adam's wine in English?)!
- Jens Pick was an always helpful, knowledgeable and friendly technician who was always ready to lend us a hand. He was the unchallenged pump expert in the group; any problems with pumps, go to Jens.
- I remember Eberhard Hulpke as an also kind, supporting colleague in the group. His friendly, easy manner made it very easy to interact with him.
- Manfred Faubel had the biggest apparatus in the group; it was huge, and must have been hellishly difficult to run (?). He was also a very easy-going colleague and friend.
- Lev Rusin was a jovial Russian scientist who visited us often. I was told that he used to sing Russian folk songs in his deep sonoric voice whilst working into the night. Unfortunately I was never able to hear this; maybe I didn't work late enough?

- You couldn't be tricked easily: one particular person used to leave his office light on at night to simulate his presence there, except that he was nowhere to be found – he was caught out by you. (Obviously no name will be divulged here..!)
- After your return from your yearly visit back home to USA you always returned with vim and vigour and full of ideas on new projects, better materials, novel machining techniques, new gadgets, and so on. You were also a devotee of all things that came out of USA...
- We played football once a week at 4 pm with people from the Müller and Pauli groups, I suspect to your displeasure? At 4 pm one should be doing physics, not sport. Howard Mayne had a "physical" approach to the game; he rarely left the field unbloodied!
- No one will forget Martin Pätzold, who looked after our coffee club and made the worst coffee I have ever tasted. He smoked like a chimney, which eventually did him in. Sad.
- And then there was "Mr 150%" (according to a sign on his door), Günter Redlich, whom everybody liked. He also sadly passed away quite early – also a smoker! Also sad.
- Coming in the front door of Haus 3 was the famous Einstein photo in the stairwell (see photos later). I'm not sure why, was any relativistic work done in the group? Anyway, no-one used this entrance, it was always through the back door past the workshop to the freight elevator, which we always used; also strange, it was only four flights of stairs up to the office floor, and we were still young and fit (most of us).
- And there was Herr Sattler, whose endless efforts kept the administrative workings of the group functioning. The road between Haus 3 and Haus 1, 2 opposite was named after him, Sattlerallee; but it's now all gone to make way for new DLR buildings. My first apartment was a guest room in Haus 1, upstairs, with a view to my office opposite in Haus 3.
- DLR was always looked at a bit askance by MPI colleagues. One wag once said that if someone left MPI to go to the DLR, then the average IQ of both organisations would increase! Hmm... I have worked for the last 35 years at DLR Göttingen; I wonder if there is any truth in this...?
- My work was on the so-called (Wolfgang?) Bauer Apparatur (see photos later). I never met this person, but would like to have gotten to know him.
- Then there was the famous Lantsch Detector, a mass spectrometer involving a hot wire ionisation source, guide electronics, a permanent magnet and a cut-open photomultiplier. I also never got the chance to meet him.
- My neighbour was Uli Schwalm, a very hard worker who actually succeeded in achieving a vacuum of 10^{-14} mbar, called EHV for Extra High Vacuum, needing special devices to even be able to measure this (see photo later). He was also a heavy smoker! Hmm... a trend?
- My chore to measure reactive scattering of D + H₂ was exceptionally challenging, but a lot of fun because of its difficulty – however, nature was not about to make our life any easier by divulging her secrets to us readily. This was easily the most challenging project I have ever worked on. I was not successful, but I think Rüdiger eventually cracked it by using lasers.
- I am not sure if I should divulge this...! You had a bottle of whisky in your room with achievement marks on its side: when some auspicious event occurred (for example, a measurement that

actually worked!), you would invite people for a drop and place a mark on the bottle side. Only the bottle, strangely, didn't get any emptier, since some joker drank some of the whisky and added water to make up to the mark. Obviously I only relate this from hearsay, I don't know who this person was, and wouldn't tell you if I did!

- The "Edelstahllager"! A gold mine of expensive material and fittings. Money was never a problem, it seems. The story goes that it was not worth wasting time looking for a leak in an apparatus; to get a required end vacuum just buy a bigger pump! This is of course exaggerated and not the truth, but is still of symbolic virtue.
- I still bump into Herr Sauer of the Konstruktionsbüro occasionally at Vital Spa, a gym on the edge of Göttingen, where older people like me train to try to recapture their lost youth. In my case unsuccessfully, a forlorn hope...
- Then there was Rolf Wiegand in the glass blowers workshop. He was not healthy, nor was his environment, and he also departed early. Also sad.
- Who still remembers the technician who looked after the helium liquefaction plant? I've forgotten the name. The noise from the compressors there was unbearable, and he always had to wear cotton wool in his ears.
- On a light note, in the late 70's in the afternoon we went as a small group for coffee and cake in the canteen – in those days the canteen was still in manned (gendering!) service in the afternoon, and some older DLR colleagues have told me that the canteen in the 60's was also still open for an evening meal. Those days are long gone. I don't think this afternoon break was looked upon very approvingly by you...?
- *On a more personal message to you, Peter; you helped me when my luck was down and my wife became seriously ill in the mid 1980's, requiring my return to Germany (her family lives near Göttingen) for her hospitalisation. For this I will remain eternally grateful to you.*

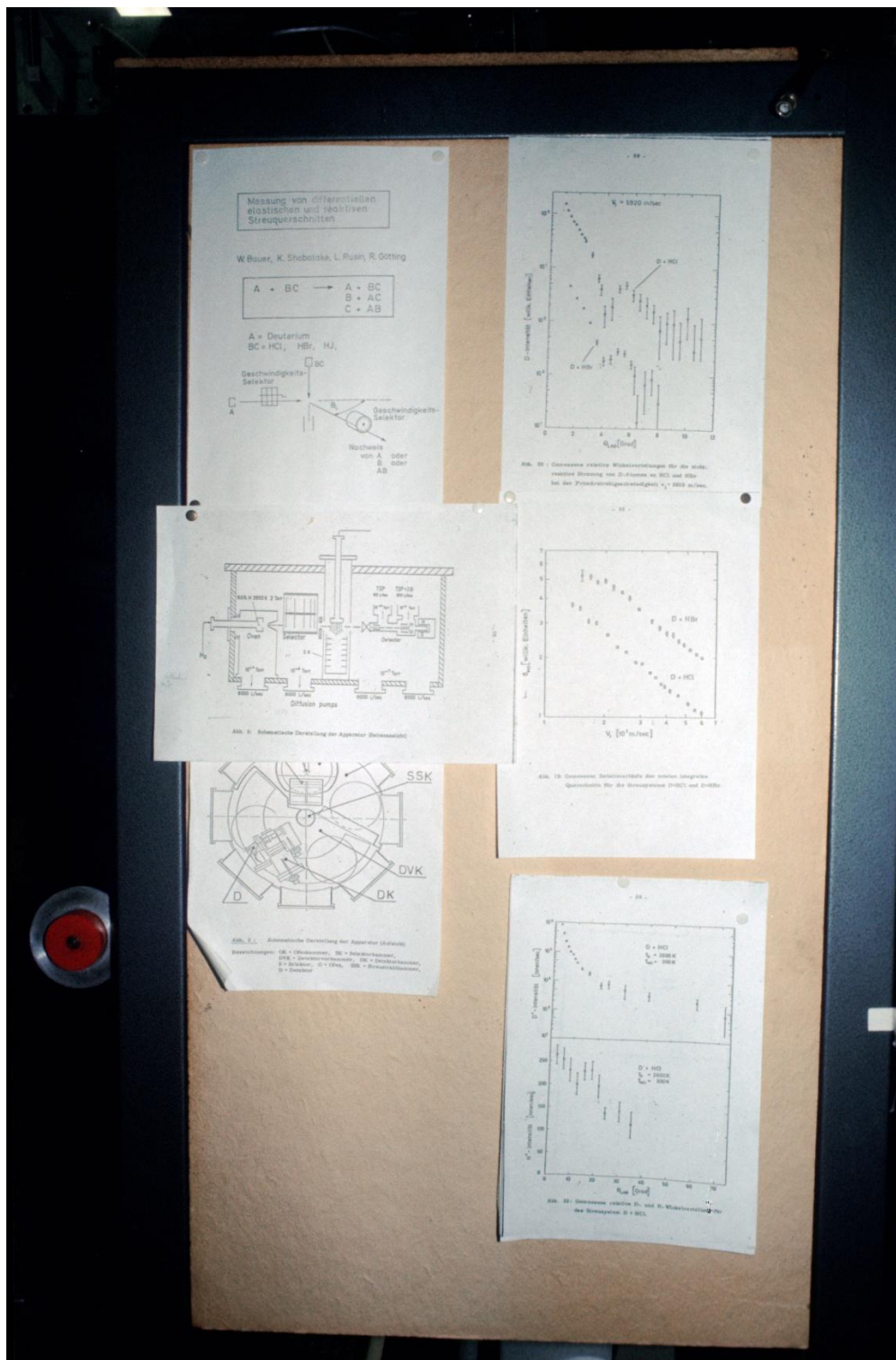
+++++

So, I wish you all the best for your 95'th birthday. Your enthusiasm for and love of physics have been an inspiration for many, as has your constant thirst for knowledge and understanding (which I share with you). (A strange aside: we are both not physicists by training but physical chemists.) Please keep this up, so that we may be able to celebrate your 100'th with you in 5 years time.

With my very best wishes,

Watto

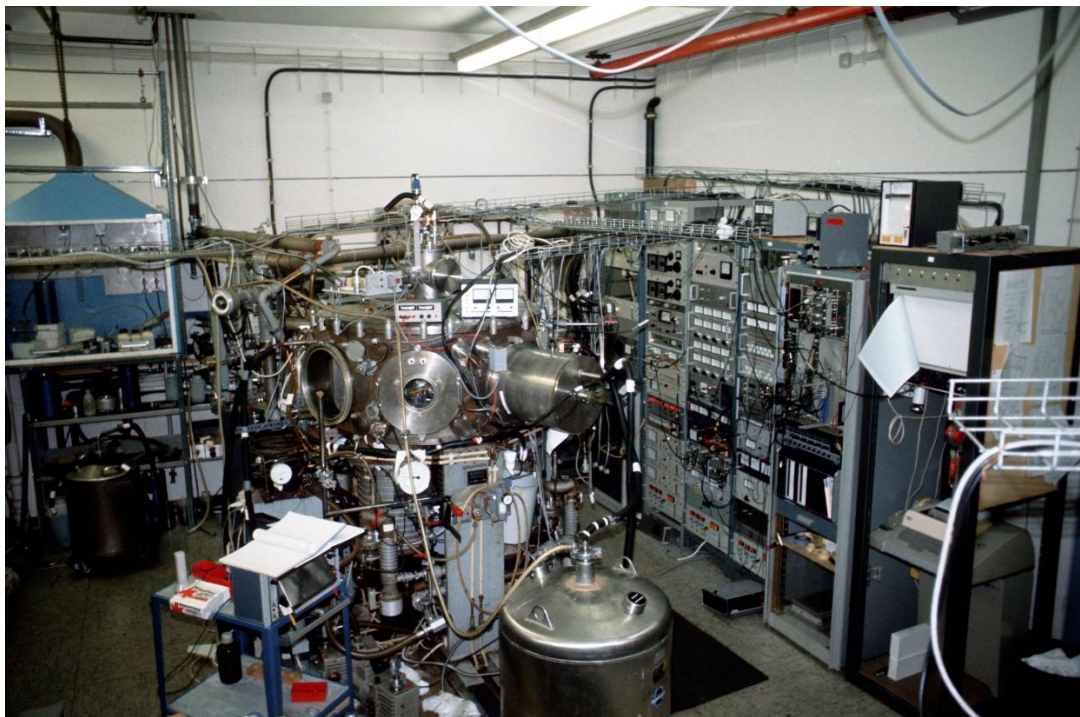
Göttingen, 30. May, 2025



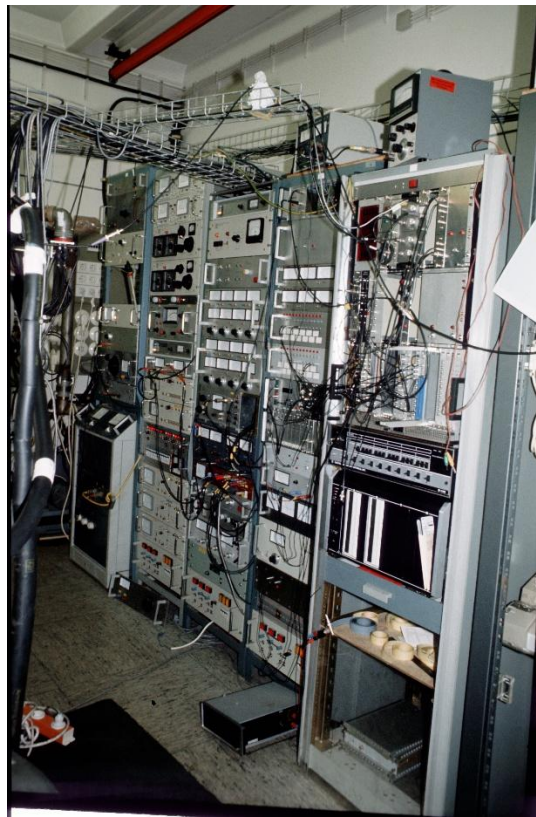
A wall poster somewhere in the corridor of Haus 3. Authors were Wolfgang Bauer, K. Shobatake, Lev Rusin and Rüdiger Götting. Work on reactive scattering $D + HX$, where $X = F, Br, Cl, I$.



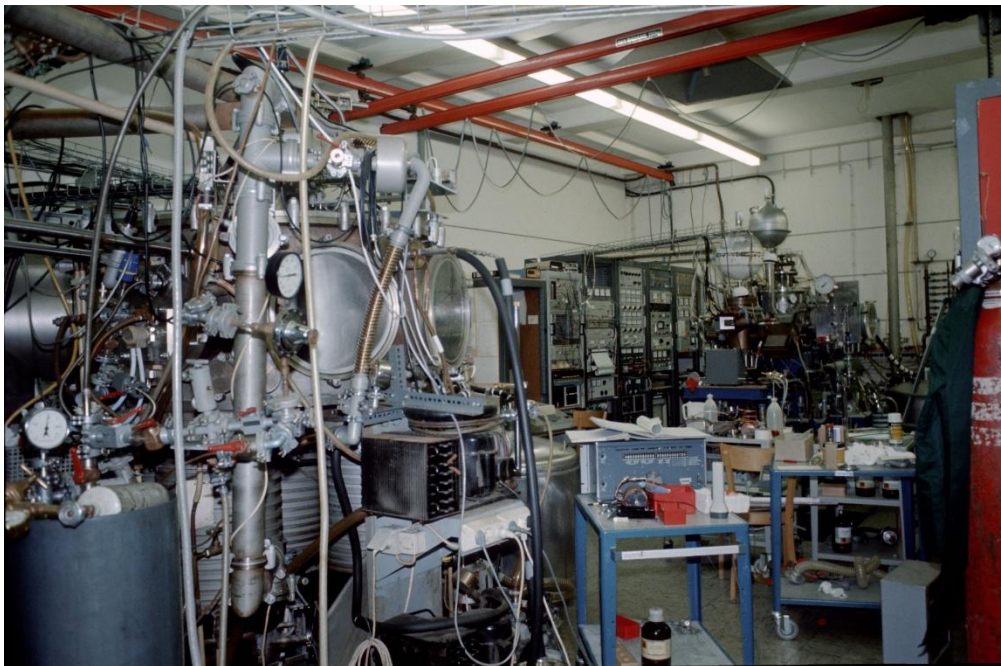
My office desk in Haus 3, with my back to the door (not the wall!). I spent many hours here perusing the literature and trying to find out why is Nature such a bitch...!



The famous Bauer Apparatur. Very complex. Many will never forget PDP11, CAMAC, ion getter pumps, Titanium sublimation pumps, oil diffusion pumps, liquid nitrogen cooling,...



Control racks for the apparatus. How many days did I stand in front of them scratching my head!
Down the bottom the famous Pätzold Kisten, which Martin had made to run the various pumps.



A view over to Uli Schwalm's apparatus, with the Bauer Apparatur to the left.