

## **Dr Jiri George Tomka**

*Colleagues will be sorry to learn of the death, on 24 May 2020, of Dr George Tomka, former Senior Lecturer in the Department of Textile Industries. The following obituary has been contributed by George's former colleague and friend, Vera Whitehead.*

J George TOMKA, Ing.Chem., *Technical University, Prague, C.Sc., Czechoslovak Academy of Science, Prague, C.Text., F.T.I.*

The University of Leeds has recently lost a genuine renowned academic and respected friend and colleague. Dr George Tomka was highly experienced in the field of Textile Physics and Fibre Science; his specialisation was in the extrusion of polymers and the influence on fibre properties, including a wide range of fibre variants. His first qualification confirms his status as a Chemical Engineer.

He was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and furthered his academic career attaining a doctorate in his field. He also met his wife, Alena, in Prague, and thus followed the happiness and love in life of which they both cherished.

George, Alena and family left Prague quickly following an invasion by Russian tanks one night, moving to England where he continued his extensive career. George and Alena remained in England for the rest of their lives, moving, after George's retirement, to Bridlington.

In 1957 George met Alena at a party when he was at the Technical University of Prague; Alena was a successful student at Teachers' Training College in Prague, and they married in 1960. In 1957 he had graduated as Ing.Chem. (equivalent to M.Sc.) at the Technical University, Prague and, between 1963-68, was at the Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry, Czechoslovak Academy of Science, Prague, where he gained his C.Sc (PhD).

On moving to England he spent a year at the University of Manchester as a Post-Doctoral Fellow, before moving, in 1969, to a position as Research Chemist at Imperial Chemical Industries Limited, becoming Senior Research Chemist in 1971. He took up the post of Lecturer at Leeds in 1978, being promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1993. He took early retirement in 1997 but was re-engaged as a Senior Fellow until 2000.

During his career, especially at the University, George made major contributions to the field of Fibre Science, giving many years service of teaching and research both to the University and to the Department of Textile Industries. He was also the Timetable Officer for the Department, at times, a very demanding position. He offered great friendship and support to all members of the Department, with especial direction to Departmental Administration and Business. His dry sense of humour was much valued by members of the Department.

As well as working in the Department, George gave both special lectures and contributed regularly to scientific conferences world-wide. He was the author of over fifty comprehensive papers and several patents, and, within the Department, he continued his lectures, and supervision of both undergraduates and postgraduates, who came to the University from all corners of the world.

He was Tutor to many years' of students, making, in many cases, firm friendships right up to the present day. George was a very well-liked person with great empathy and ethos, having

superlative understanding and patience for those with whom he made contact; a truly wonderful gentleman with a most welcoming attitude.

In 1989 George was awarded the Chartered Fellowship of the Textile Institute, Manchester, with C.Text., F.T.I., and it was with considerable pleasure that we learned of the award of the S.G. Smith Memorial Medal by the Textile Institute of Manchester in 1994, for his outstanding work and contribution to Fibre Science.

On a more personal note, George was a loving family man; he offered sincere friendship; he had a good sense of humour; he loved swimming and when in Prague swam in the Danube. Similarly, in retirement in Bridlington, he used to go down to the coast and enjoy bathing in the sea making use of his cherished beach hut. He was a lover of music all his life and when at the University used to frequent the lunchtime concerts. At his home in Bridlington he developed a studio with extensive audio equipment for listening, recording and for sheer enjoyment.

In composing this tribute to George, invaluable contributions have been received from the following friends and former colleagues: Dr Michael G Dobb, Dr George C East, Dr Kenneth C Jackson, Professor Michael A Hann, Azim Abadi, and last but no means the least, by Mrs Alena Tomka. I am indebted to them all for their kind assistance and comments.

George will be sadly missed by all who knew him. He leaves his wife, Alena, his daughter Zuzana and his son, George. May God rest his Soul.

*'Happiness is the Joy of Achievement and the Thrill of Creative Effort' (F.D.Roosevelt)  
George certainly achieved all of that.*