

GERSTEL celebrates its 50th anniversary

From one-man show to internationally acclaimed laboratory solutions provider: the story of GERSTEL can be summarized in just those few words. The company will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in October 2017. A fitting occasion to reflect on our roots, celebrate our achievements and venture a guess on what the future may hold.

By Guido Deussing

Eberhard Gerstel, born in 1927, husband and father of three sons, worked at the venerable Max Planck Institute (MPI) for Coal Research in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany. A talented craftsman and creative precision mechanic, he developed and built measurement and control instrumentation as well as laboratory equipment for the MPI scientists. At the time, demand for sophisticated equipment was soaring and not only at the MPI. Eberhard Gerstel resigned his position at the MPI in 1967 at age 43 to start his own business. In a garage-turned-fine mechanical workshop in Mülheim an der Ruhr, the company „Labormechanik Gerstel“ was born. The first devices created were all custom built. Initially, his precision mechanics and engineering skills were fully enough to meet his customers' demands, but technology is constantly evolving and after only three years, Eberhard Gerstel's team counted four employees, including experts in electronic control technology. The trend was plain to see: Growth. Eberhard Gerstel developed humidity sensors, contact thermometers and soon filed his first patent; the company would go on to file a total of around 200 patent applications by 2017. In the mid 1970s, gas chromatography (GC) became GERSTEL's main line of business. The entrepreneur broke into the GC market with a patented seal technology and a highly specialized GC inlet system. Eberhard Gerstel successfully eliminated major limitations of conventional gas chromatographs of the time, adapting them to the newly developed capillary columns and helping to improve their overall sensitivity significantly. His Cooled Injection System (CIS) became the world's most successful means of introducing and analyzing samples by GC using programmed temperature vaporization (PTV). The opportunities for GERSTEL continued to present themselves, but they seemed to require delivering more than “just” hardware in order to have further growth: Application support was needed in order to ensure customer satisfaction and to attract further business. Eberhard Gerstel brought on a team of chemical engineers, the company had now grown to a total of 30 employees. Scientists from other fields followed, many of whom held Ph.D. degrees, ensuring that the company

had expertise equal to its customers. The company expanded its laboratories and entered into several strategic partnerships, for example with Hewlett-Packard in 1986, one of the world's leading manufacturers of gas chromatographs and detectors, a business area which was later split off under the name of Agilent Technologies. Now GERSTEL was finally able to offer clients complete analytical solutions, opening up a wealth of opportunities. Eberhard Gerstel Sr. handed the company over to his sons Eberhard. G. Gerstel and Holger Gerstel who took the reins along with longtime employee Ralf Bremer in 1998. The new generation of leadership quickly accelerated the company's growth by focusing on international expansion. As early as 1994, the company's first US subsidiary, GERSTEL Inc., had opened its doors. In short order, GERSTEL AG in Switzerland was founded in 2000, GERSTEL K.K. in Japan in 2004, and GERSTEL LLP in Singapore in 2010. The company was additionally represented in more than 70 countries worldwide using a network of dedicated and trained distributors. In the new millennium, GERSTEL followed the trend toward automation and miniaturization in the laboratory while critically expanding and deepening our software development capabilities. The steadily growing company has now become one of the world's leading providers of innovative solutions for automated sample preparation and sample introduction for GC/MS and LC/MS. 50 years after Eberhard Gerstel Sr. founded his company, GERSTEL's solutions are well-established in a broad range of markets and fields of application. Our systems are used across many key industries, in academic research, as well as by food safety and environmental protection authorities. GERSTEL today stands for unparalleled efficiency, performance and productivity in the modern GC/MS and LC/MS laboratories.

Maintaining and strengthening the company's position will also be the goal for coming generations of GERSTEL management. And Eberhard Gerstel Sr., who passed away in 2004 at age 77, will look favorably upon it all: From the pillar that bears his likeness erected in his honor in front of GERSTEL's corporate headquarters at No. 1 Eberhard-Gerstel-Platz.

