Editorial

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This special issue of Tumor Biology honours the long and successful career of Sabine von Kleist, who celebrated her 60th birthday on December 2nd, 1993. Sabine von Kleist was born and raised in Berlin, during a difficult era in German history. She studied medicine in Chicago and Frankfurt from 1955 until 1962 and gained her medical doctoral title in 1964 at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University in Frankfurt. From there she went to Paris where she deepened her scientific knowledge, studying the biological differences between tumour and normal cells at the Institut de Recherches Scientifiques sur le Cancer (IRSC), Villejuif, France, in the laboratory of the late Pierre Burtin. During this period, in parallel to Phil Gold's studies in Montreal, she independently discovered the carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) and, additionally, the closely related nonspecific cross-reacting antigen. With this exceedingly valuable research, that laid much of the foundation for a field that continues to expand 30 years later, she earned her docteur ès sciences at the University of Paris (Sorbonne) in 1970. She was later offered her present position of director and chair for Immunobiology in the Medical Faculty at the University of Freiburg, Germany, which she accepted in 1978. After moving back to her home country, she not only built up her own CEA research group,

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but extended her interests to studying the usability of other tumour markers in different types of malignancy. More recently, she has also focussed her investigations on the properties of tumour-infiltrating lymphocytes and what regulates their anergic status. During her distinguished career, Sabine von Kleist has been an active member of the Medical Faculty holding positions of Vice-Dean and Dean. She has also represented the University as Prorector, Senator and President of the Great Senate. She has been awarded numerous prizes, including the 'Bun-desverdienstk-reuz 1. Klasse des Bundesverdienstordens der Bundesrepublik Deutsch-land', for her untiring support of German cancer research. She is the vice-president of the 'Deutsche Krebshilfe' and a member of the scientific committee of the 'Dr. Mildred Scheel-Stiftung fur Krebsforschung'. She is on the editorial boards of numerous scientific journals, including Tumor Biology, and is a member of various professional societies. She is currently President of the International Society for Oncodevelopmental Biology and Medicine.

In her honour, an international 1-day symposium was organised on her birthday in Freiburg, dealing with the area of research which owes so much to her: the CEA gene family. A number of distinguished international speakers were invited to talk on various aspects of this family, from the basic biology to its clinical usage. Shortly after the discovery of CEA in tumour cells and its apparent absence in corresponding normal tissues, the clinical potential of this putative 'tumour-specific' antigen was dampened by its identification in some normal tissues. Although this placed limitations on its clinical use, CEA was certainly not forgotten, and the discovery of a whole family of closely related molecules with variable expression patterns, together with an exact determination of their structures through molecular cloning has yielded a great deal of useful information on the basic biology of the CEA family. Indeed, evidence is growing that certain members of this family are differentially regulated in tumours compared to normal tissues and that they may play a causal role in tumour development and progression. In parallel with the development of therapeutic methods, the use of CEA as a target molecule for both tumour immunolo-calisation and its potential for developing new forms of both passive and active immuno-therapy of tumours give reasons for optimism for its future clinical application.

The following collection of papers should not only give an idea of the present status of our knowlege on the CEA gene family, but also signpost trends for future research. It is also a suitable occasion to say thank you to Sabine von Kleist and other pioneers for creating a field of research that is continuously yielding exciting new information towards a better understanding of both normal cell biology and tumour development. In the name of all who know her, we wish Sabine von Kleist further success in her scientific career and a long and well-earned retirement to follow, devoted to herself, her family and her animals.