Dr. Hans R. Held of Geneva: 80 Years Old

The Board and Membership of ORCA wish to extend their warmest congratulations and sincere thanks to Dr. Hans R. Held on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

Hans R. Held was born in Switzerland on the 4th of September 1910. He soon emerged as a true Citizen of the World, however. Completing his dental studies, he found little occasion to practice dentistry in peace and complacency. The Second World War interrupted his career as a research worker and university teacher; the young Swiss army officer now faced the challenging task of organizing mobile dental surgery in a complex mountain military defence system and in a country facing border threats from north, south, east and west. He did it brilliantly.

In postwar Europe, his pragmatism and ability to identify priorities made him realize that, with recovering economies and concomitantly rising caries experience, dental health for children would be a serious problem. His study of the literature and of the situation at home led him to conclude that, in fluoridating their drinking water, the USA were on the right track. Europe was different, however, and extensive research would be required to develop and establish technologies appropriate to its diverse populations and social structures. In 1953, he founded the ORCA, in the desolate research environment of the postwar era, as an association of European research scientists whose aim was to be research on fluorine and caries prevention. He himself made substantial contributions in the area of fluoride’s action on the functioning of the thyroid gland and on the development of fluoride tablets. Even more important was his role as a continuous source of inspiration to his colleagues. Thanks to him, the European Dental Research Community was a fact decades before the European Economic Community began to function properly. Throughout these many difficult years, Hans Held totally ignored the Iron Curtain which divided Europe.
Many colleagues and friends in the East are grateful for the Congresses of the ORCA which were organized every few years in one of their otherwise isolated countries.
Hans R. Held, the Founder of the ORCA, has served the Organization successively as President, as its long-standing Secretary General, and as its legal representative. His friends and colleagues in the ORCA, young and old, thank him for his enormous contribution to the dental health of Europe, past, present and future. On a more personal note, we would like to thank him for the pleasure and collegial friendship which he, through the ORCA, has granted us all. On this, his 80th Birthday, we wish him and Mme Blanche Held many more happy and active years together.