

De Ley, Jozef

Born: July 1, 1924 – Ghent

Died: November 16a master , 1997 – Ghent

De Ley studies chemistry at the University of Ghent, simultaneously taking up a bachelorship in pharmacy. After graduating as a master (chemistry, about a study of the dissociation constants of a few organic liquids) in 1946, he obtains the title of doctor in 1949. He starts his academic career as assistant professor of physiological chemistry at the Veterinary School of Ghent and lectures on microbiology, first a freely chosen subject by the students and from 1959 on the microbiology of plant physiology. His qualification as a full university professor comes in 1958.

Between 1969 and 1981 he also lectures at the University of Leuven (KUL) and joins as guest professor the Davis University (California, September 1956 till February 1957), Urbana (1961), Natal (1966), London (1968) and Laval (1969). He takes study leave to work with Virtanen (Helsinki), Kluyver (Delft), Doudoroff (Berkeley) and Van Niel (Pacific Grove). At the University of Ghent he founds in 1969 the Laboratory of Microbiology.

He becomes professor emeritus in 1989.

De Ley is elected as member of the “Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor wetenschappen en kunsten” in 1963 and director in 1979.

He is also member of a number of international scientific organizations (New York Academy of Science, the American Chemical Society, the Dutch Vereniging voor Microbiologie, the Biochemical Society, the Royal Society of Medicine) and honorary member of the Deutsche Gemeinschaft für Mikrobiologie und Hygiene, of the South-African Society of Microbiology and of the Société de Microbiology of Nancy (France).

About his research

He is mainly concerned with the metabolism of the bacteria. After a first study on the ferments of nitrogen-depleted *Escherichia coli* (the subject of his PhD title in 1949), he specializes in the carbohydrate metabolism of a number of bacteria and discovers intermediary metabolites. Further research leads to study of bacterial evolution and DNA-DNA and DNA-rRNA hybridisation.

He contributes to “*Bergey's Manual of Systematic Bacteriology*” (1984) and chapters for the standard book of bacteriology *The Prokaryotes*. The genus *Deley* and *Sulfurospirillum deleyanum* are named after him.

He is honoured with Belgian (the Van Helmont Prize, the Jan Stas Prize, the Van Niel-prize) and international titles (the Bergey Award, medals of the universities of Helsinki and Brno)

For his qualification as a full professor he writes a dissertation concerning the oxidative metabolism of sugars in micro-organisms.