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YOLO COUNTY NEWS

## Obituaries

### Dieter W. Gruenwedel

By [Special to The Enterprise](#)

June 21, 1931 — Jan. 17, 2015

Dieter Wolfgang Gruenwedel, Ph.D. (Dr. rer. nat.), died on Jan. 17, 2015, from complications following meningioma surgery. He was 83.

He was born on Jun. 21, 1931, to Otto and Helene Gruenwedel in Altenburg, Thuringia, Germany. His childhood was marked by dramatic events during World War II, including periods of near starvation and a bomb dropping — but not exploding — in his back yard.

Dieter's life passion was chemistry, even in his youth. Despite the occasional explosion in the lab, he was allowed to teach chemistry to some of the younger students while still in high school.

After the war, his part of Germany became the Soviet-occupied country of East Germany.

Disillusioned by the authoritarian power of the Communist Party, Dieter and his friends founded a student resistance group that distributed anti-government fliers and broadcast anti-Stalinist messages using a self-built radio transmitter.

Shortly before graduating from high school in 1950, Dieter eluded the police by escaping to West Berlin with a close friend. Others in the resistance group were arrested and given long prison sentences; some were even executed.

After a stint in industry, Dieter finally began his studies (1953-63) in West Germany at the University of Tuebingen, thanks to a generous scholarship and acceptance into Leibniz College (1952-53), an interdisciplinary undergraduate institution affiliated with the university. There he received his doctoral degree in biochemistry and physical chemistry.

While in school, Dieter met Alice Brady, an American from New York who was studying German. They married in 1959 and moved to the United States in 1963, settling in California.

Dieter was a postdoctoral research fellow at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. In 1966 he became a professor of biophysical chemistry in the department of food science and technology at UC Davis, a position he enjoyed for more than 25 years. Beside his teaching and research duties — specializing in the toxicology of metals on human DNA — he edited two textbooks for food science and nutrition graduate students.

Dieter spent two years on sabbatical to pursue research at the University of Freiburg, Germany (1972), and the University of Dijon, France (1980).

Over the years he pursued many hobbies and activities, including camping trips with his family across the United States and western Canada, trips to Europe, cross-country skiing, and listening to jazz. He was a voracious reader, specializing in World War II history. He also collected the Wild West adventure novels of Karl May.

Dieter is survived by his wife of 55 years, Alice B. Gruenwedel, of Davis; children Erik Gruenwedel of Athens, Ga., Christine Gruenwedel-Kron of Davis, and Stefan Gruenwedel (Susan Parini) of San Francisco; and granddaughters Corinna Kron of Davis, and Peri and Erin Gruenwedel of Los Angeles.



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