

## PORTRAITS



### Professor Dr. Rudolf Braun

born: 24th January 1920 in Lenzburg, Switzerland  
died: 1999

Professor Dr. Rudolf Braun, the doyen and grand old man of Swiss waste management. He put special focus on promoting composting. The high density of composting plants in Switzerland in the 1970s is not least due to his activities.

### Education

- Kantonsschule (Swiss high school) in Aarau, graduating in autumn 1939;
- Natural Sciences at ETH Zurich.

### Academic career

His university teachers, Professors Gagman and Jaag, were able to fill him with enthusiasm for hydrobiology. At the age of 26 Rudolf Braun was granted a scholarship of the University of São Paulo to research the water resources of the Amazon River with regard to the settlement of Brazil. He analysed the research results of this travel between 1946 and 1948 in his dissertation on limnological studies of some lakes in the Amazonian region («Limnologische Untersuchungen an einigen Seen im Amazonasgebiet»),

which earned him the Silver Medal of ETH Zurich.

In the years 1951/52 he went on extended botanical-hydrobiological study trips to Africa (Sahara, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon).

In 1952 Rudolf Braun became head of the institute of qualitative water management and hydrobiology at the technical university of Karlsruhe, Germany. However, he rejected the professorship offered to him. In 1954 he returned to his home canton to establish one of the first cantonal water protection specialist units in Aarau in his role as hydrobiologist of Canton Aargau.

In 1955 Professor Jaag invited Rudolf Braun to EAWAG (the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology) and assigned him the task of establishing the section of «Waste research» at EAWAG, which later evolved into the department of «Management of solid waste». He headed it for 28 years. In this position he was active as researcher, teacher and adviser.

In 1970 Rudolf Braun became associate professor and in 1973 full professor of waste management at ETH Zurich. During this time he also was director of the institute of water protection and water technology for several years.

He retired in 1987.

His work was very multifaceted: new knowledge was acquired in research and applied in technical problem solutions. However, Rudolf Braun was not the kind of man who intended to curb the increasing flood of waste merely by technical means.

He was a pioneer of waste avoidance and recycling; «Waste is resources in the wrong location» – this phrase was coined by him and has often been quoted.

Rudolf Braun was a sought-after expert at home and abroad. He promoted international cooperation and his amiable and approachable character facilitated his contact to decision makers on all levels.

Between 1970 and 1985 Rudolf Braun was president of the Swiss association of water protection and air pollution control (VGL).

Since 1955 Rudolf Braun was scientific secretary of the «International working group of waste research» (today «International Solid Waste Association»). In this role he promoted the international cooperation between national organisations. He was also substantially involved in the organisation of the international congress on urban cleaning in Vienna in 1964 and the congress of the international working group of waste research (IAM) in Basel in 1969.

Rudolf Braun was a member of the Swiss federal commission of waste management («Eidg. Kommission für Abfallwirtschaft») and in 1972 became president of the European Federation for the Protection of Waters (FEG).



He was the first foreigner to be invited by the German government to join the German Advisory Council on the Environment. In this role Rudolf Braun also had great influence on the current EU legislation in the area of resource management.

Rudolf Braun advocated an environmentally sound waste management. He searched for solutions that were based on the natural cycle of elements and recognized early on the various possible uses of waste.

**Source**

Hans Wasmer, Ueli Bundi; Walter Obrist (Niederhasli);  
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