

Dr. Roland Haitz (1935-2015) - Co-inventor of LED technology

Roland Haitz was born in 1935 in Durmersheim. His family had an agricultural sideline as usual at that time. Early on he got to know the hard life and hard work in the fields and woods. The handling of horses as draught animals also belonged to his environment.

His maternal great-grandfather was a village school teacher, his grandfather ran a small grocery store. Roland liked arithmetic and mathematics there even before his schooldays.

After primary school in Durmersheim, he went to grammar school in Rastatt. After graduating from high school in 1956, he first studied physics in Karlsruhe and then at the Technical University in Munich under Nikolaus Riehl, a pupil of the atom pioneers Lise Meitner and Otto Hahn. Riehl was also a leading expert in the field of light and fluorescent lamps. Roland Haitz's vision grew that a new, more effective generation of luminaires could change the world.

In Munich, he had the opportunity to meet the American Nobel Prize winner William Shockley, co-inventor of transistor technology, at a major congress.

In 1961, before completing his doctorate, Roland Haitz went to the Shockley Semiconductor Laboratories in Mountain View, California, to work in the field of semiconductor technology and earn his doctorate.

Together with Shockley, he obtained a patent and, with this recommendation, moved to Texas Instruments (TI) in Dallas/TX in 1964. But 5 years later he moved back to Palo Alto in California to Hewlett Packard. He became head of research at the Optoelectronics Department, where the first LED work began. His inventions were not only important for HP, but also very profitable.

In 1984, he joined Hewlett Packard as R-D Manager (Research and Development) and was responsible for the first HP LED products, such as print heads and displays for scientific computers.

The development of pocket calculators with small displays goes back to his research. They became a worldwide bestseller for HP.

With the development of LED displays for everyday devices, such as microwave ovens, elevators or in the automotive and traffic sectors, the breakthrough of LED technology was finally perfect. Today, LED devices are an integral part of our everyday lives.

Roland Haitz recognized the importance of this technology early on and formulated it in his "Haitz's Law", named after him.

After his retirement, Roland Haitz was constantly on the road at many international congresses and lectures all over the world and was highly regarded as an expert.

We in Durmersheim can always be proud of our "compatriot" Roland Haitz at the daily sight and use of LED devices or lighting.

During his visits to Durmersheim he also liked to visit the Hardtmuseum, especially since it is only a stone's throw away from his parents' house.

His naturalness and simplicity, his humour and his storytelling will remain in our memories.

After a serious illness Roland Haitz, "Godfather" of LED technology and Silicon-Valley-Pionier, died in his Californian home in 2015.

Roland Haitz is the author of "Haitz's Law", which is considered important by experts:
Haitz's Law