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# TO THE MEMORY OF DR.H.C. PROF. RNDR. MARIÁN BABIAK, PH.D. EDITOR OF WOOD RESEARCH JOURNAL



Recently, the Wood Science world said farewell to one of its loveliest members, Professor Marián Babiak. I would like to share a few memories of the man who was known to many of us, and whose name was, for so many years, associated with this Wood Research Journal.

## Teacher at the Technical University (TU) in Zvolen

Professor Babiak's passion for sharing his knowledge and working with students were clear from the beginning of his career. As a graduate student, from 1972, he lectured, taught labs and examined on the theory of heat and mass transfer and wood anisotropy at the Faculty of Wood

Science and Technology in Zvolen. With the help of tensors, he taught new aspects of wood anisotropy and, as a result, received from students the honorary title of 'Tensor'. During his career, he taught subjects such as Wood Science, Wood Physics, Wood Mechanics, Wood Drying Theory, Modelling and Theory of Similarities, among others.

He published several sets of lecture notes in Wood Science subjects, and was co-author of the textbook Structure and Wood Properties, which received an award from the rector of the Technical University (TU) in Zvolen.

Professor Babiak supervised a number of graduate students at the TU Zvolen, the Czech University of Life Science (CULS) in Prague and at the University of Sopron, Hungary.

After social and economic changes in Slovakia in the late eighties, Professor Babiak became the first Dean of the Faculty of Wood Science and Technology at the TU in Zvolen in 1990. Later, he served as Vice-dean for the Faculty and Vice-rector for research and development for the university and, in 2001, he was appointed by the President of the Slovak Republic as a full professor. He was a vital part of the Department of Wood Science throughout his career, and led the Department from 2010 to 2014. The last years of his career, he worked as a professor for the CUSL, but even he retired, he functioned at the TU in Zvolen as an emeritus professor.

## Research and Development at the TU in Zvolen

Wood science was intertwined throughout Professor Babiak's career, from 1976, when he defended his graduate study in 'Heat transfer in wood and measurement of thermal characteristics'. His professional life showed that science has no borders. In the years before 1990, he acquired knowledge both of Western countries and the communist world, visiting the USA and the former Soviet Union, and working with Professors Siau, Skaar, Sergovsky and Šubin, and his life-long friend, Professor Ugolev.

From 1997 to 2000, he collaborated with the University of Hamburg and University of Sopron within the 5<sup>th</sup> Framework programme project Inco-Copernicus, which helped to move the research at the Department of Wood Science forward. Later in his career, he helped to connect young researchers in his department with colleagues at the Research Institute of Wood Industry, Chinese Academy of Forestry in Beijing.

## International recognition

His career was not focused only in Zvolen and, for his active collaboration with them, the University of Sopron awarded Professor Babiak an honorary doctorate in 2003.

He was a member of the Society of Wood Science and Technology and was elected a member of the International Academy of Wood Science in 2011. His global recognition in the world of wood science led to him organise and co-chair two Wood Science conferences in Zvolen: the IAWS Annual Meeting in 2012 and the International Convention of SWST in 2014, the latter being the largest international Wood Science conference in the history of the Zvolen TU.

Professor Babiak registered over 127 publications, cited in 897 sources. He is co-author of three patents and developed two methods of measuring heat transfer characteristics and gas transfer characteristics in wood.

## Conclusion

Dr.h.c. prof. RNDr. Marián Babiak, PhD. was an integral part of the Wood Science community. He was hugely influential in the teaching and development of science at the TU in Zvolen, the CULS in Prague and the University of Sopron, Hungary, throughout a career spanning over 40 years, and lasting until the last moments of his life. He created many Wood Science specialists, and shaped the development and direction of still more graduate students and colleagues. He is well-known among students for his saying: 'An averagely intelligent dolphin could handle this!' Another of his sayings was, 'Deadlines are meant to be postponed.' Unfortunately, he could not postpone his destiny.

Although he is no longer among us, his memory remains. He was an expert, a scientist, a teacher, a reviewer, an editor, a supervisor and much more besides. He was a loving and beloved husband, father and grandfather. We remember him as a person with a big heart: a heart for family, a heart for students, a heart for colleagues and a heart for wood and wood science. We remember a mentor, a friend, a colleague with a gentle smile and a natural sense of humour. A person who is carved into our memories and whom we will not forget.

Thank you and farewell, Professor.

Dr. Rastislav Lagana Head of Department of Wood Science Technical University in Zvolen T. G. Masaryka 24 96001 Zvolen, Slovakia