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Farewell to Dr. Wolfram Lemke (1955–2005)



Wolfram Lemke, deputy head of the Marine Geology Section in the Baltic Sea Research Institute Warnemünde, and university lecturer at the Institute of Geography and Geology, Greifswald University, died on April 21, 2005 while performing his duties at the Baltic Sea Research Institute. The cause was a sudden heart attack. He has left behind his wife Elke and their two children, Maria and Georg.

The community of Baltic Sea geologists has not only lost an internationally admired scientist, but also an excellent friend. Wolfram studied geology at the University of Greifswald from 1975 to 1980. He received his diploma in geology after successfully completing and defending the theses “The cliff profile at the ‘Hohes Ufer’ coast of the Darss Peninsula”, supervised by Kurt Ruchholz. After graduation, he moved to Freiberg, Saxony, where he took a position as assistant professor in sedimentology at the prestigious Mining Academy from 1980 to 1984. There, supervised by Manfred Kurze, he completed his dissertation “Sedimentary and petrographical investigation of Palaeozoic quartzite’s in southern part of East Germany”. But, the Baltic Sea lured him back to the Quaternary landscape and the city of Rostock, where he had been born in 1955.

In 1984, Wolfram obtained a research position at the Institute of Marine Research of the former Academy of Sciences of the GDR at Warnemünde. He stayed there when it turned into the Baltic Sea Research Institute (IOW) after the German unification in 1992. For more than 20 years he devoted to the “job of his dreams”, as he called working on the geology of the Baltic Sea. He published numerous papers in reputed nationally and internationally journals. When he was accepted as a university lecturer at Greifswald University, his professorial dissertation “Sedimentation and paleogeographical development of the western Baltic Sea area (Mecklenburgian Bight to Arkona Basin) from the end of the Weichselian glaciation to the Littorina transgression” became a scientific benchmark.

Wolfram was an active Member of the Scientific Program Committee of the International Journal BALTICA since 1994 when the journal was renewed by the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. He had permanently reviewing the manuscripts on the Quaternary and sedimentology of the Baltic Sea submitted by authors from different surrounding countries. His opinions were always very exact, motivated and certainly helpful for BALTICA authors. Wolfram gave a right hand driving BALTICA scientific program. The BALTICA Scientific Program Committee will miss him very much.

Scientific contacts tied Wolfram to the community of Baltic Sea geologists – particularly to those in Denmark, Poland and Sweden. The cooperation that he established with the geological surveys and geology departments of these countries have yield valuable fruits for the Institute of Baltic Sea Research. Research vessels became his second work place, first at the *A.v. Humboldt*, and later at the *Professor Albrecht Penck*, the *Sonne*, *Polarstern*, or Russian vessels, such as the *Petr Kottsov*, which he used for his expeditions to the Baltic Sea and the North Atlantic.

He could only publish the sheets for “Darss” and “Falster-Mun” of a planned series of sedimentological charts mapping the sea floor of the Baltic within the German Exclusive Economic Zone. The manuscript for the “Arkona” sheet prepared in collaboration with Dr. Rudolf Endler and Dr. Franz Tauber has just been handed over to the Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie Hamburg for printing.

The void that Wolfram's departure has left in national and international research projects is hard to evaluate. First, we have to mention here the DFG Research Unit SINCOS (Sinking Coasts), where he served as the scientific secretary of the core group and as leader of the subproject dealing with the history of the Littorina transgression in the western Baltic Sea. Particularly important in this interdisciplinary research project were causes and effects of coastal retreat in the southern Baltic Sea, challenge at which his ability to integrate teams and his broad scientific knowledge will be difficult to replace. The continuation of the project DYNAS for modeling natural and anthropogenic sediment dynamics in the Baltic Sea is hardly imaginable without Wolfram's competence as sedimentologist. It is hard to imagine who will be able to replace Wolfram at the German/Russian projects GISEB investigating the deep basin sediments and the Baltic Sea, or in the German/Chinese project PECAI where we study the Pearl River sediments in the South China Sea.

Wolfram enjoyed teaching and guiding young colleagues trying to make progress into our wonderful profession. He was an equally devoted mentor early at the Mining Academy at Freiberg and later at

Greifswald. At Greifswald he taught courses in methodology of shelf sea geology. His success as instructor was a combination of scientific excellence and a gift for explaining complex concepts in simple terms. At Greifswald, Wolfram is already sorely missed.

Wolfram has left an undeletable mark in the Marine Geology Section of the IOW. His friendly personality and his ability to listen enriched our working environment. But this recollection will be grossly incomplete if we only mention his friendly and gentle side. Let us say that, above all, we admired the blend of determination and kindness with which he was able to fight for his ethic and scientific principles.

Wolfram departed suddenly; there was no time for some final spoken or written words. He did live his legacy. It is a legacy for the benefit of the Quaternary geology of the Baltic area and for the benefit of the university community. We invite you to follow his example and extend his legacy.

Jan Harff

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