

Obituary

Professor Dr. hab. Jerzy Ważny, full member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1927-2010)



Professor Dr. hab. Jerzy Ważny

On August 23, 2010, Professor Dr. hab. Jerzy Ważny, a full member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, passed away. He was an outstanding scientist, the founder of the Polish school of wood protection and conservation, an expert in problems of biological corrosion of buildings, an experienced university teacher and educator of young people.

Professor Jerzy Ważny was born on December 18, 1927 in Borysław near Lwów. He had started his university education soon after the World War II at the Forestry Faculty of the Warsaw Agricultural University (now Warsaw University of Life Sciences) SGGW in Warsaw. He specialised in wood pathology and conservation under the guidance of Professor Dr. hab. Józef Kochman. He also studied wood anatomy and microbiology at the Warsaw University under the guidance of reverend Józef Szuleta PhD, and Professor Kazimierz Bassalik.

In 1949, being a student, he started his occupational career in the Institute of Building Technology in Warsaw where he was in charge of the first Polish Department of Building Mycology. In 1956 he returned to SGGW together with the Department he had founded. Afterwards, he both founded and developed the

Department of Wood Pathology and Conservation. In the period 1979-1998 he kept working at the Faculty of Wood Technology, Warsaw Agricultural University SGGW, being the head of the Chair of Wood Protection. He gained the subsequent scientific degrees and titles in his maternal University: PhD in the technical sciences in 1957, habilitated doctor and assistant professor (docent) in 1962, associate professor in 1969, and full professor in 1976.

In the years 1979-1981 Professor Jerzy Ważny was the Dean of the Faculty of Wood Technology of SGGW, and since 1983 he collaborated, as a consultant, with the Institute of Wood Technology in Poznań. He was active in many government and nongovernment organisations, being among others, the president of the Committee of Wood Technology of the Polish Academy of Sciences PAN (three terms); he was chairman of the Interministerial Commission of Wood and Buildings Protection, chairman of the Scientific Council at the Minister of Forestry and Wood Industry, chairman of the Technical Committee no 185 in the problems of Wood Protection at the Polish Normalization Committee. He was an adviser of the Minister of Construction Industry and Building Materials in the area of buildings protection in the years 1960-1963.

In 1991 Professor Jerzy Ważny was elected a corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) and became a full member of the Academy in 2004.

Professor Jerzy Ważny was also a member of very many international organisations and associations among them, he was member of the International Academy of Wood Science Since 1976, founder-member of the International Research Group on Wood Preservation since 1970 (now IRG on Wood Protection, Sweden); the latter organisation honoured the Professor, during its 38th annual meeting held in Jackson (USA) in 2007, with the title of "Honorary Life-Long Member".

The scientific heritage of Professor Jerzy Ważny includes about 450 publications, more than 120 of them were published abroad by the leading journals, such as e.g., "Wood Science and Technology", "Wood and Fiber Science", "Wood Protection", "Holzforschung", "Holz als Roh- und Werkstoff", "Holztechnologie", "Material und Organismen", "International Biodeterioration", "Chimia Drevesiny", or "Documents of IRG on Wood Protection". The number of citations of the Professor's papers in the worldwide literature amounts to about 200, according to the Science Citation Index. Many of his realised project tasks were original and pioneer papers, contributing to the progress of the worldwide science.

Professor Jerzy Ważny was an internationally appreciated scientist. He cooperated with the leading researchers in the field of wood protection; among his scientist fellows were: G. Becker from Berlin-Dahlen, W. Liese from Hamburg, W.P.K. Findlay and J.E. Levi from the U.K., V. Rypáček from Brno, A. Wakin from St. Petersburg, S. Gorschin from Moscow, H. Greaves from Melbourne, and very many others. He has visited many countries of the World (Australia, New Zealand, Japan and others) as a visiting professor. In Poland, he collaborated with many scientific centers, such as e.g., the Wood Technology Institute in Poznań, the Department of Wood Protection and Conservation of the Faculty of Wood Technology in Poznań, the Faculty of Fine Arts Conservation and Renovation of the Fine Arts Academy in Warsaw. He maintained close occupational contacts with

skansens, museums and other institutions, leading mutual research projects and publishing joint papers.

Professor Jerzy Ważny paid a lot of attention to the development of teaching programs in the field of wood protection and conservation. As early as 1979 he introduced a new subject to the curriculum of the Faculty of Wood Technology of SGGW: "The protection of wood", prior to that date he had had lectures in wood and building protection at the post graduate studies at the Faculty of Forestry Faculty of SGGW; he also had lectures at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw Institute of Technology. For more than 30 years, Professor Jerzy Ważny had regular lectures in conservational microbiology at the Faculty of Monuments Conservation of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, as well as lecturing the problems of wood conservation at the Faculty of Archeology and the Department of Ethnology of the Warsaw University. During his impressive, nearly 50 year-long occupational activity, Professor Ważny was a scientific supervisor of over 100 of graduated students, and 11 PhD's, out of which 5 persons reached the scientific title of professor. Of particularly high practical importance were the trainings and teaching courses organised for many years at the Center for Staff Excellence of the Ministry of Communal Industry, and still led by the Polish Association of Building Industry Mycologists (PSMB) in Wrocław, where more than 2500 building industry engineers and monument conservators have been trained.

Professor Jerzy Ważny was an initiator and organizer of the biannual Symposia on Wood Protection, held cyclically since 1963, as well as a co-organizer of the Scientific-Technical Symposia of PSMB, and the "Kontra" Conferences organised under the auspices of PZITB.

The activity of Prof. J. Ważny was internationally appreciated. He was honoured with frequent prizes and awarded many medals, including the Ron Cockcroft Award of International Research Group on Wood Protection in Sweden (1990), Bogdan Marconi medal of the Academy of Fine Arts (ASP) for his achievements in the field of monuments protection (1997), the Władysław Danilecki PZIT prize for the extraordinary achievements in the field of building objects longevity improvement and protection against corrosion (2004), as well as the Michał Oczapowski medal of the Polish Academy of Sciences for the great contribution to the progress of forestry sciences (2006). Professor Jerzy Ważny was also honoured in 2000 the title of a Honourable Member of the Polish Association of Building Industry Mycologists (PSMB – Wrocław).

The scientific career of Professor Jerzy Ważny is a model example of the ability to define life goals and their consequent realisation. He continued his creative scientific activity till the very last days of his life. In 2010, Professor Jerzy Ważny was honoured for the whole of his occupational activity with the award of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland.

With His death the Polish science has lost a prominent scientist and specialist. We have lost a friend and an authentic man.

Prof. Dr. Krzysztof J. Krajewski