

In Memoriam: Waldemar Gorzkowski

OBITUARY

— Contributed by Dr. Andrzej Kotlicki

On July 15, 2007, the President of the International Physics Olympiad Dr Waldemar Gorzkowski passed away in Isfahan, Iran. He died suddenly in the middle of the activity he loved most—presiding over the International Physics Olympiad (IPhO), the competition for the best high school physicists in the world. He led the IPhO for 23 years. It was under his leadership and due to his vision that the Olympiad grew from 10 participating countries from the so-called Eastern Bloc to over 90 countries from all over the world.

Waldemar was born on November 12, 1939, in Warsaw, Poland. He obtained his MSc in Physics from Warsaw University in 1962 and immediately started working for the Institute of Physics, Polish Academy of Science (PAN), as a research scientist. He was a theoretical physicist interested mainly in group theory. He defended his PhD in 1976.

He worked for PAN all his life, part-time after he reached the retirement age of 65. He also spent a few years as a visiting professor in Indonesia.

Since the very beginning of his professional career he was interested in outreach activities. He joined the Committee of the Polish Physics Olympiad and served on it until this year. He was at different periods a director and scientific secretary of the Polish Physics Olympiad and participated from 1970 in the organization of the IPhO. Since the establishment of the permanent secretariat of the IPhO in 1984 he became the Secretary, and, when this function was renamed, the President of the IPhO.

He was also a founder of the research competition for high school students: “First Step to a Nobel Prize in Physics” and co-founder of the “World Federation of Physics Competitions”.

Apart from his research papers he was an author of over 10 books (some translated into many languages) about the Physics Olympiads and over 100 popular articles.

In Waldemar we lost a great promoter of high level physics education and wonderful friend.

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<<http://www.jyu.fi/tdk/kastdk/olympiads/gorzowski.html>>



Dr. Waldemar Gorzkowski at the 2007 International Physics Olympiad (IPhO).

Photograph courtesy Farhad Ranjbaran