

WALTER G. KAUMAN (1923-2005)



Walter G. Kauman August 1999

Walter G. Kauman passed away on the 11 November 2005, in South of France where he was retired. He was born and educated in Berlin until the “Abitur” in 1941.

In 1947, he immigrated to Australia where he started his professional career as worker in the plant of the Radio Corporation Ltd, during one year, before joining the CSIR, as technical assistant in the drying section. In the mean time he prepared the Bachelor of Science in physics, at the University of Melbourne. He was graduated in 1953 with the “Dixon Scholarship” Prize.

He completed his studies in Belgium at the Free University in Brussels where he has obtained a “Licence Spéciale” in Chemical Physics in 1957 and prepared a PhD in chemistry under the supervision of Professor Ilya Prigogine (Nobel Prize winner in 1977).

Back to Australia in 1959 he was promoted to Senior Research Scientist at the CSIR where he has occupied all the positions until Chief Research Scientist, Deputy Director of the Division of Building Research (Staff 300).

On leave from time to time from the CSIRO, he has had a long career for the UNO in South America as FAO or ONUDI expert:

- in Chili from 1962 to 1964, to start the research on forest products, for the “Instituto Forestal” in Santiago,
- in Paraguay, in 1970, for the “Instituto Nacional de Tecnología y Normalización” in Asunción, in the field of wood industries and research,
- in Venezuela from 1974 to 1978 as chief of a FAO project on “Forest management and wood utilization” for the “Ministerio del Ambiente y de los Recursos Naturales Renovables and the “Corporación Venezolana de Guyana” in Venezuelan Guyana

In 1978 he settled in France where he joined the CTBA (Wood and Furniture Technical Center) in Paris to be in charge of Research, until 1988.

In this position he has had a great influence on the development of Wood Research in France by the strong relationships that he has build with the Research Laboratories in the Universities, CNRS (National Research Center), INRA (National Institute on Agricultural Research). Thanks to Walter Kauman, numerous French Scientists have started and developed their Research in Wood Science.

Due to his large expertise he was called in numerous committees: Deputy Coordinator of Forest Products Division of IUFRO, Fellow of the "Institute of Wood Science, elected fellow of the IAWS, associated member of the "Institute of Foresters of Australia", member of different French Scientific Councils, where Wood Science was involved (Pulp and Paper Technical Center, Ministry of Research and Technology, Ministry of Agriculture, Tropical Forest Technical Center...)

In 1992, he was in charge of the congress of the division V of IUFRO, in Nancy. It was a great success with more than 800 participants from all over the world.

As scientist he was author of around 70 papers (in scientific journals or proceedings) in Wood physics, Wood Drying, Wood Mechanics, Forest Utilization and Management.

He has had in parallel of his career of scientist and research leader, a long activity as Professor in different Universities:

- Chili: Universidad Austral in Valdivia, Universidad de Chile in Santiago, Universidad Bio-Bio in Concepcion from 1988 to 1991, where he was full time Professor in the Department in Wood Engineering,
- Uruguay: Universidad de la Republica in Montevideo,
- France: Universit é Nancy 1 in 1987/1988 where he was associated professor;

As a conclusion, we must underline the extremely important role played by Walter Kauman in the creation and the development of R/D activities in the field of wood and forest products in Latin America, particularly in Chile, and in France. He had, apart from Australia and France, its two countries of adoption, a very particular feeling for Chile, which he regarded as one of his second fatherlands.

Lastly, let us point out the memory of his wife Janine, deceased a few years before him and who always actively accompanied him during their 50 years of common life.

We will always keep in memory the fundamental part played by Walter Kauman in the development of Wood Sciences, and his strong interest for our Academy, where, thanks to him, many fellows have been nominated and elected!

Fellow Xavier DEGLISE, President IAWS

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