

## Anniversary of Professor Jerzy Ważny – full member of the Polish Academy of Sciences



Professor Dr. hab. Jerzy Ważny

The year 2007 is the date of the 80th anniversary of Prof. Dr. hab. Jerzy Ważny, known as a prominent scientist, specialist in a wide range of wood protection issues, comprising both wood industry, forestry, building industry and preservation of historical monuments; he is also a full member of The Polish Academy of Sciences, International Academy of Wood Science, as well as numerous, societies and institutions both national and foreign, recognized for his involvement and contribution into the advancement of science, wood science, wood protection, historical monuments and national cultural heritage preservation.

Jerzy Ważny was born on December 18th, 1927 in Boryslaw, then situated in the Lvov voivodship. He completed his studies at the Faculty of Forestry at the Warsaw Agricultural University in 1950; he specialized then in the field of pathology and wood protection in the team of Prof. Dr. hab. Józef Kochman. Having completed his diploma he broadened his knowledge at the Faculty of Biology at the Warsaw University in the areas of anatomy and wood cytology under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Józef Szuleta, and in the field of microbiology under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Kazimierz Bassalik.

Already during his studies in 1949 he initiated his long-lasting professional activity in the area of wood protection. He was the organizer of the first Polish Department of Building Mycology which was brought into existence in 1950 at the Institute of Building Technology in Warsaw.

After he had returned to his mother University together with the Department he had created, he also began a new activity and created the Department of Pathology and Wood Preservation, next renamed to the Department of Wood Protection at the Faculty of Wood Technology of the Warsaw Agricultural University; he was the head of the units till 1998.

At present Professor is a consultant at the Wood Technology Institute in Poznań. He has been active occupying different positions and functions in both governmental and social institutions and organizations: the chairman of Wood Technology Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences (3 terms of office), chairman of Inter-ministerial Wood and Building Protection Committee, chairman of Scientific Council at the Ministry of Forestry and Wood Industry, chairman of Polish Standards Committee for wood protection matters (PKN), member of Historical Monuments Preservation Council (PKZ), he was also a consultant to the Ministry of Construction Industry and Building Materials for protection matters (1960-1963).

The scientific achievement of Prof. Jerzy Ważny is impressive, valuable and inter-disciplinary; it comprises 450 publications, including 300 of scientific-research character; 100 of them were published in leading foreign periodicals e.g. "Wood Science and Technology", "Wood and Fiber Science", "Biodeterioration", "Holzforschung", "Material und Organismen", "Holz als Roh-und Werkstoff", and "Chimia Dreviesiny".

He either worked out or participated in building numerous instructions, directives and projects related to broadly meant wood protection, 17 state standards and branch directives for investigating the quality of wood protection agents, and 7 patents for wood preservatives.

Professor Ważny has been recognized and esteemed with specialists owing to the achievements crucial both for the theory and practice in the area of wood protection, obtained in the period of his almost 60-year long research activity; his works are widely cited in both Polish and international scientific literature. The number of citations reaches 190 (Science Citation Index).

The investigations researched pathology and wood preservation as raw material, processed wood, as well as wood materials in buildings and constructions, in dwelling and farm objects, historical ones both secular and sacral, including those ranking high in the history of the country.

The research concentrated on diagnostics, physiology, physiography and biology, as well as ecology of the organisms destroying wood, mainly fungi. Strong emphasis was put on the investigation of the influence of fungi on wood properties, methods of testing wood protection agents quality, as well as methods of preservation.

Professor Jerzy Ważny often applied original and innovative research methods, targeting at obtaining new data and information, frequently reaching areas unknown to others thus being a pioneer in the field of pathology and wood preser-

vation. He is a person of hard work and deep research passion – his most vivid feature till today.

Professor has been awarded with various distinctions and prizes such as:

- Ron Cockcroft IRG-WP prize in Sweden (1990),
- Władysław Danielecki PZITB prize for outstanding achievements in the field of toughness and protection of buildings against biodeterioration (2004),
- Bogdan Marconi medal of the Academy of Fine Arts for the activity in the field of historical monuments protection (1997),
- Michał Oczapowski medal of the Polish Academy of Sciences for outstanding impact imposed on the development of silvicultural sciences (2006),
- title of an honorary member of the Polish Association of Building Mycologists (2000),
- title of Honorary Life-Long Member of International Research Group on Wood Preservation; 38th Jackson Conference, USA (2007).

The didactic activity of Professor has been extremely rich and varied. He conducted classes and lectures at both Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology at the Warsaw Agricultural University, as well as Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Art Masterpieces of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and at the Warsaw University, Faculty of History, major of ethnology.

He lectured on protection and preservation of wood, forest phytopathology with microbiology, biological corrosion of materials, protection of folk art pieces against biological corrosion, and protection of buildings and wooden historical monuments. Long-lasting activity in the Educational Center of Ministerial Municipal and Construction Industry Staff in Wrocław, and presently in the Polish Society of Construction Industry Mycologists is worth mentioning here since altogether more than 2500 engineers and conservators of monuments have been trained there.

He also conferred 11 doctoral degrees; three scientists have become professors. He was in charge of approx. 110 M.Sc. theses at Faculties of Forestry and Wood Technology, Warsaw Agricultural University. In the period 1978-1981 he was the Dean of the Faculty of Wood Technology, and a member of the Senate of the Warsaw Agricultural University for many years.

Professor is the initiator and organizer of 23 Wood Protection Symposia. Beginning from 1963, they take place biannually with the participation of Polish and foreign scientists and engineers. The gatherings became the source of knowledge, technical progress, creative inspiration for protection practice and wood preservation in various fields of both economy and social activity.

The Professor's achievements are both of scientific-theoretical and application nature. He was a co-author of organizational concepts, methods and agents undertaken to eliminate fungal attack of buildings; a matter of high importance in the post-war Poland. He headed the team who worked out 9 thou. expert opinions of buildings and other objects affected by fungi decomposing wood and insects-technical pests of wood.

Under the supervision of Professor various wood preservation procedures were carried out in such prominent places as Zamek Królewski (the Royal Castle) in Warsaw, Palaces in Nieborów and Wilanów, numerous wooden churches, construc-

tions in almost all Skansen and folk buildings museums. Alongside with Dr. Michał Czażnik, he conducted for many years a conservator's protection in the Museum of Folk Constructions in Sanok, as well as the Lublin Countryside Museum.

Prof. Jerzy Ważny travelled to many countries as "visiting professor" e.g. India, Australia, New Zealand, as well as "invited speaker" to various conferences and scientific symposia as the chairman, section moderator or the author of the leading opening paper.

High standard personal culture, open attitude towards co-workers and students, exceptionally vast professional knowledge, erudition in the area of modern and latest scientific and branch literature make him an exceptional personality respected by students, colleagues, specialists in the field of wood protection and moreover by most prominent scientists of the country-the members of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

The activity of professor brought about both creation and development of new scientific fields-pathology and wood preservation, mycology and construction microbiology, biological corrosion of materials and industrial raw materials (biodegradation).

Owing to these great achievements Professor is recognized as the creator of the Polish scientific wood preservation and construction protection school, acknowledged both home and abroad.

Polish wood technologists involved in the protection and preservation of wood-both scientists and those applying science in practice, wish to express their best wishes and hope for good health, all good luck, further scientific successes for the good of arboriculture and successful development of the country.

*Andrzej Grzywacz*