

WOJCIECH SZCZEPIŃSKI (1924–2010)

OBITUARY



PROFESSOR WOJCIECH SZCZEPIŃSKI, member of the Editorial Advisory Board and former long-term member of the Editorial Committee of *Archives of Mechanics*, passed away on June 6th, 2010.

Wojciech Szczepiński was born in Warsaw, Poland on January 1st, 1924, in a family of civil servants. After early loss of both his parents in 1937, care of him took over the family of his aunt. The World War II starting in September 1939 substantially complicated his education process. Due to abolition of secondary and higher education under Nazi occupation of Poland, he attended underground courses. After the end of the war he studied at the Engineering School of Wawelberg and Rotwand and in 1954 graduated from the Faculty of Mechanics and Technology of the Warsaw University of Technology. Between 1954 and 1957 he was the Head of the Department of Aviation Technology in the Institute of Aviation. Independently, he started his scientific career as early as in 1949 under supervision of Professor Zbigniew Brzoska at the Engineering School of Wawelberg and Rotwand and continued it later at the Faculty of Aviation of the Warsaw University of Technology. In 1960 Wojciech Szczepiński obtained his PhD degree presenting thesis on theoretical analysis of plastic deformation

of metals which was recognized with the M.T. Huber award of Division IV of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Wojciech Szczepiński spent one year 1961/62 as a post-doctoral research fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he carried out experimental work in the field of metal plasticity. Upon return to Warsaw, he continued his scientific activity at the Institute of Fundamental Technological Research (abbreviated as IPPT) of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He earned his D.Sc. (habilitation) degree based on the thesis entitled „Strain hardening at generalized plane stress in plastic medium” and became associated professor at IPPT in 1964. In the year 1977 Wojciech Szczepiński was conferred the title of Full Professor in Technical Sciences by the State Council of Poland. He held positions of importance at IPPT such as Chairman of the Scientific Council of the Institute in the years 1984–1986 and head of the Department of Continuous Media in 1986–1993.

Wojciech Szczepiński was elected a Corresponding Member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) in 1976 and a Full Member of PAN in 1989. His activities in the Academy were significant and multilateral; he was a Member of the Presidium of the Polish Academy of Sciences in the years 1993–1998, Chairman of Division IV of Technical Sciences of PAN in 1993–1995, Chairman of the Committee of Mechanics of PAN in 1984–1986. As a delegate of the Academy, he was active in international organizations in the field of mechanics. Between 1980 and 1997 he was a Member of Scientific Council of the International Centre for Mechanical Sciences (CISM) in Udine, Italy, a Member of Administrative Council of CISM in 1980–1988, a Member of General Assembly of International Union of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics (IUTAM) in 1980–1991. In the years 1992–1994 he was Chairman of Section of Technical Sciences of the Central Commission for Scientific Degrees and Titles in Poland.

Besides his organizational skills, Professor Wojciech Szczepiński was first of all a remarkable scientist and teacher. His main fields of interest were: experimental and theoretical mechanics of materials, mechanics of plastic flow of metals and soils, strength design of machine parts by limit analysis, error analysis in engineering. He published over 100 papers in scientific journals; his most widely recognized papers are those on experimental studies of yield surfaces of metals subjected to a complex loading history. He frequently pointed out that in successful research on mechanics, both in the theoretical and experimental work, a good fresh idea plays a predominant role. His lectures were well-organized and clear, included a number of instructive examples illustrating major concepts and basic steps. He was the supervisor of 14 PhD Theses, and several of their authors became professors. In recognition of his achievements, Wojciech Szczepiński earned honorary doctorates from Military University of Technology in Warsaw in 1989 and from Kielce University of Technology in 2002.

As the author of 15 books, seven of which written individually, Wojciech Szczepiński demonstrated his exceptional ability to present apparently difficult theories, concepts and results from a variety of fields in a remarkably simple and transparent way. For example, in the monograph “Introduction to the Mechanics of Plastic Forming of Metals”, PWN and Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1979, an English translation of the first edition in Polish in 1967, translated also to Chinese, he presented in a clear way a rigorous and at that time modern approach to the analysis of stress and velocity distributions in metals undergoing plastic deformation processing. In another book “Limit States and Kinematics of Soils” (in Polish), PWN, 1974 he elaborated the extension of the methods developed for metals to soils. His book “Plastic Design of Machine Parts” (in Polish), PWN, 1968 was later significantly extended in cooperation with his co-workers to four monographs, one published in English: “Plastic Design of Complex Shape Structures”, PWN and Ellis Horwood, 1990. In the last year he co-authored a book “Error Analysis with Applications in Engineering”, Springer, 2010 lying in his another field of interest. A next book, being in preparation, could not have been finished.

Professor Wojciech Szczepiński will be missed by his co-workers, colleagues and friends.

*Henryk Petryk
and the Editorial Board*
