In Memoriam

Manfred Kudlek
(1940-2012)

Obituary read at the closing ceremony for CiE 2012, Cambridge, June 23, 2012

by

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Before boarding the busses for the Bletchley Park Excursion, I encountered my old friend and colleague Manfred Kudlek, talking to Jiri Wiedermann. He boarded the first bus, while we took the second one. The next day I learned that he had died of a cardiac arrest, thus turning us into some of the last colleagues who have talked to him.

The content of our exchange had nothing to do with his work; we were discussing the forthcoming edition of ICALP, the International Colloquium on Automata, Languages and Programming, to be held in Warwick.

Above all Manfred was known as mr. ICALP. During the 7th ICALP held in Noordwijkerhout in 1980 it was discovered that Manfred was the only participant having attended all ICALP's at that time. By way of reward he was granted free participation at all future ones on the condition that he would keep is perfect attendance record intact, something which he achieved. Next month's meeting in Warwick would have been edition 39. At ICALP he had his own task of maintaining the complete record of each participant's contribution in terms of papers presented. People with 5 or more ICALP papers (weighted by the number of authors) would receive a special button made by himself, as would the conference chair and co-chairs.

Manfred was a well known visitor to other Computer Science Conferences as well. He had a great interest in sharing his experiences at such meetings with the

world. He wrote many conference reports, including extensive tables on the distribution across topics and nationalities of the authors of the contributed papers. Aside of the 211 technical papers on his CV there is a list of 152 other publications, mostly conference reports which have been published in the Bulletin of the European Association for Theoretical Computer Science (EATCS).

Another contribution to prosperity were the pictures he made at conferences, which is the main issue on which we have cooperated. From June 1979 till October 1989 I was the picture editor of the EATCS bulletin and Manfred was a main contributor. In October 1989 we switched roles when he took over as picture editor, a position he held till October 2003 when the production of the EATCS bulletin was completely restructured. By way of example, on the web you find as fourth item in Google when you query for Manfred Kudlek a collection of pictures from the Iceland 2008 ICALP.

His prime interest area was formal language theory, a field not strongly represented here at CiE but a traditional topic at ICALP. He has also worked on small Universal Computational devices, a topic closer to the CiE area. Inspection of his publications shows that his interest in language goes far beyond the formal ones. His website has both a Spanish and Romanian version (aside of the German and English ones which one could expect). There are early papers on tables of eclipses derived from Babylonian and Maya sources. He worked on natural languages, both live and historical ones but also on topics like Calendar systems. In fact his first academic position in Hamburg was an student assistant position in Humanities at the institute for antique American Languages.

Computer Science has lost not only a well respected colleague, but also a major contributor to the preservation and maintenance of our records. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to fill this gap, and his absence at conferences, especially ICALP, will be noted. Manfred will be missed.

Pictures of Manfred

at excursion ICALP Aarhus Jul 14 1982
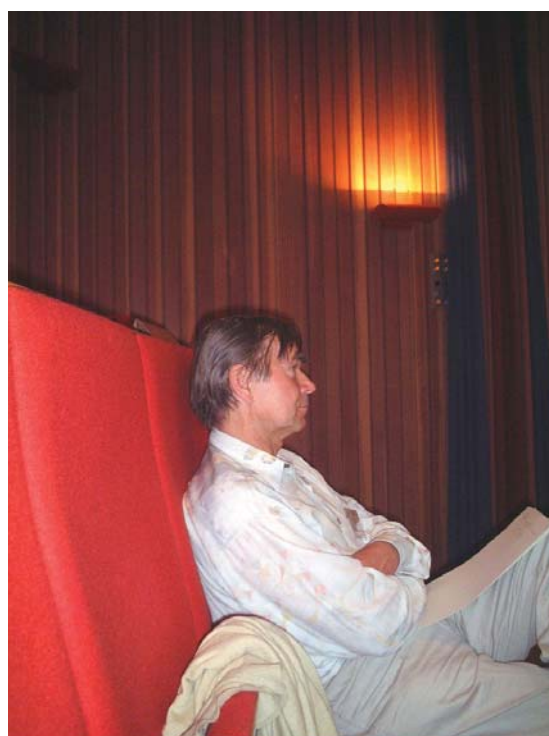

at STACS 1991 in Hamburg

Manfred in his office, Feb 17 1991

at the EATCS General assembly in Bologna Jul 09 1997

at the EATCS General assembly in Bologna Jul 09 1997

at ICALP 2003 in Eindhoven

Manfred giving his report at the ICALP 2003 general assembly

at ICALP 2003 in Eindhoven

Manfred with elf queen Titania at the Efteling, ICALP 2003

Manfred making pictures at the ICALP 2003 conference diner