

We Were Olek's Friends for Over 60 Years

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The three authors of this note led most of their lives side-by-side with Olek Guterch and his wife Basia. We studied at the same faculty and worked at the same Institute. We were also friends all the time. We met so long ago (see young Olek in Fig. 1) that many of our companions have already passed away. Sadly, Olek is not with us either. We present here few remarks about Olek and also express our deep and hearty condolences to Basia, their two daughters and grandchildren.

MAGDA RECALLS

I am very sad and, at the same time, very proud to be able to write a few words concerning one of our most outstanding geophysicists-seismologists who, unfortunately, recently passed away. Sad – because he is no more with us, and proud, because I may add something about him. As I am not a seismologist and never worked with Olek, I will not write about his numerous scientific achievements, but I will say a few words about the circle of friends – students of geophysics, physics, and astronomy – that formed during the years of our study and to which he belonged. In our leisure time, we gladly participated in dance parties organized in the Hoża 69 building (Faculty of Physics, University of Warsaw) and at our private homes. Later on, we sometimes talked with Olek about dances in the garden of the house I lived.

After obtaining a master's degree with a very good result, Olek got a post at the University, and after 2 years moved to the Institute of Geophysics, PAS. All other friends also started working after graduation, but our group kept meeting several times a year, especially during the name days or birthdays of its members. In a short time, the weddings began – Olek married Basia Weber, a geophysicist who came from Poznań – and then the children were coming. I remember very well the party devoted to bathing their first baby-girl that Olek and Basia organized for friends in their first home. There was a very touching request from one of our common friends who asked Olek and me to stand as godparents to their son.

Olek and Basia were very interested in history, especially old arms and maps, as well as Hucul handicrafts. In their home, one could see numerous items connected with those hobbies.



Fig. 1. Young student in the woods and in a laboratory.

So every visit finished with a very interesting guided excursion. Following his historical interests, Olek was a member of the Association of Lovers of Old Arms and Uniforms (Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Dawnej Broni i Barwy), and its Chairman over the years 2002–2016.

All friends of Olek and Basia will remember him forever.

ANNA RECALLS

When Olek passed away, many pictures came into my mind. I got acquainted with him in my first year of study: while attending a geophysical lecture, I noticed a new student sitting with us, a small group of future geophysicists. It was Olek, who joined our group somewhat later than all of us, because of his long recovery from a traffic accident. Since then, I remember his nice, friendly smile.

Time went on, Olek got married to our good friend Basia, graduated from the University, engaged in earth sciences, and soon joined the Institute of Geophysics, PAS. Basia also worked at the Institute through her whole professional life; she was preparing seismological bulletins from Polish seismological stations and analysed the seismicity of our country. The knowledge about other interests, abilities and hobbies of Olek has been disclosed gradually. My first surprise came when I visited the Guterch's place and noticed a small piece of wood furniture, very nice and useful in a tiny apartment. "Where have you bought it?" I asked. „It was made by Olek" – answered Basia. And so I learned that Olek, in addition to his scientific talents I knew, was a gifted carpenter.

We once met in Leningrad, USSR, sometime in the 1960s. We talked for a long time, but his longing for his family and home overwhelmed the conversation.

We also met upon his return from his stay in Dallas, USA; he showed me some old Indian artefacts he bought – so I learned about his historical interests. It was really unusual at those times to bring from the USA things like that, while more practical items were badly needed in our communist country. But not for Olek, who was already completing his private collection, although not Indian, but rather from his native area.

My admiration for Olek's historical knowledge was enhanced when, while being in Cracow at the meeting of the Academy of Arts and Sciences (I accompanied my husband), he advised us to go to the exhibition about Galicia, the region he was born. He guided us through this exhibition, providing very interesting remarks, so we learned a lot. Unfortunately, I didn't have an opportunity to visit his recent home collection.

I saw Olek in July 2023 when the Institute celebrated its 70th anniversary. He looked happy and healthy, with the same smile as during our first meeting some 67 years ago. I never expected that it would be our last meeting.

MAREK RECALLS

I studied together with Olek at the University of Warsaw, but most reminiscences associated with him come to me from a later period, when I participated in scientific expeditions under his guidance (Fig. 2). He demonstrated extraordinary energy and efficiency in organizing geodynamic investigations of the Earth's crust in the northern and southern polar regions (Spitsbergen and West Antarctica). Firmly believing in the importance and need for such research, Olek engaged researchers from Norway and Germany and was able to secure adequate financing and co-financing (e.g. from foreign sources), and then establish and manage the complex logistics of the work. The Institute of Geophysics, PAS, assembled a group of participants, including me, because I already had experience in doing research in polar conditions. Under Olek's guidance, I participated in three geodynamic expeditions to West Antarctica (1979/1980, 1984/1985, and 1990/1991) and also three to Spitsbergen (1976, 1978, 1985).

The research involved recording and analyzing seismic waves generated by underwater explosions. It was necessary to select measurement regions and find transportation adapted to polar conditions. Each measurement site had to be manned by at least two geophysicists, who had to be provided with accommodation and recording equipment. The idea of measurements was innovative on a world scale.

Olek perfectly controlled everything, despite the fact that he had to operate in a difficult political and financial situation in Poland. He headed the entire project, establishing cooperation with appropriately specialized Polish institutions, such as the Marine and Land Geophysics Enterprise "Geofizyka Toruń", the Hydrographic Service of the Navy (ORP "Kopernik"), and the Polish Ship Salvage (tugboat m/s "Jantar"). The research often required active cooperation with institutions from other countries.

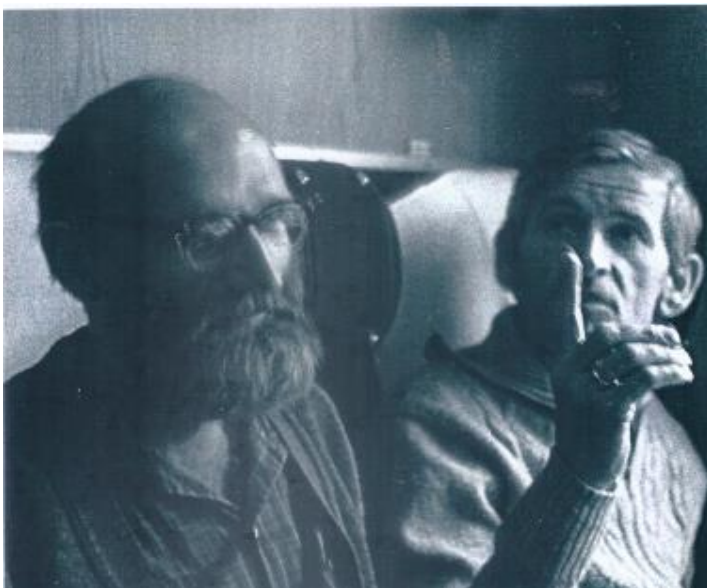


Fig. 2. Olek Guterch (right) explains something to the author.

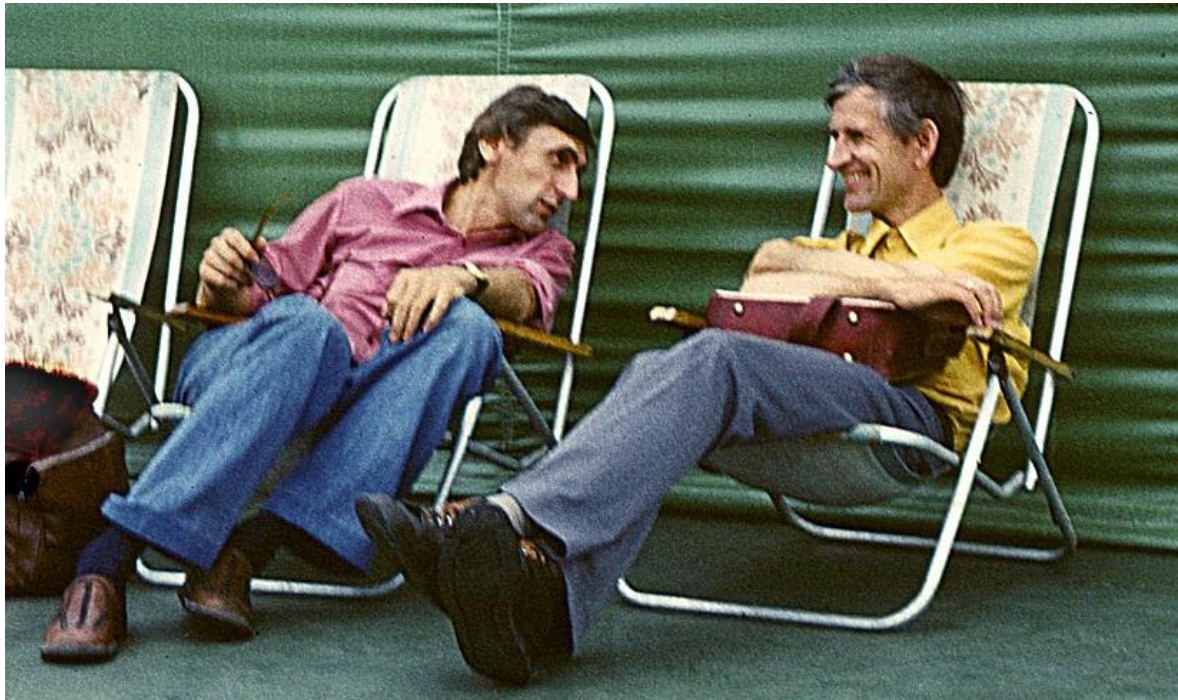


Fig. 3. Andrzej Zawada (left) and Olek Guterch (right) resting on a cruise to Spitsbergen during the First Expedition.



Fig. 4. In those days, collecting antlers was legal. Standing after the return from the First Spitsbergen Expedition are its participants (from left): Edward Perchuć, Marek Górski, Aleksander Guterch, Jan Pajchel, Jacek Kowalski, and Zbigniew Czerwiński.

In addition to gathering the technical equipment and designing the scientific program, it was necessary to assemble several teams, consisting of competent people, to select measurement sites, install the instruments and accommodation, and conduct the measurements. Before the first expedition to Spitsbergen, Prof. Roman Teisseyre, Deputy Director of the Institute and a famous geophysicist, advised Prof. Guterch to add to this expedition the well-known Himalayan explorer Andrzej Zawada, an experienced organizer of expeditions to the world's highest peaks, who at that time was working at the Institute's Department of Seismology (see Fig. 3).

The innovative research of Olek Guterch and his colleagues has received much international acclaim and provided excellent data, which are described in other chapters of the book. For the participants of the expeditions (see Fig. 4) they were an excellent opportunity to gain experience in field research under extreme conditions. They also provided the background for further development and improvement of research at Polish polar stations and the next extensive geodynamical projects.

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