

OBITUARY for Prof. Dr. Wilhelm BARTH

Wilhelm Barth passed away on 31 October, 2021, at the age of 90, after a short, serious illness. Wilhelm Barth was born on 21 July, 1931, in Worms am Rhein as son of the later Lord Mayor of Mainz and grew up in the turmoil of the Second World War. After studying mathematics at the TH Darmstadt, which he completed in 1957, he married his Gisela, with whom he subsequently had three children - Thomas, Claudia and Stephan.



Professionally, he began at the TH Darmstadt as a research assistant to Prof. Alwin Walther, under whom he wrote his dissertation on the Graeffe process in 1963. A striking aspect of this dissertation is a "calculation plan" of the method, written in Algol-60. Today one would call it a program code. As a major task in the 1960s, Wilhelm Barth took on the establishment and management of the university computer center in Darmstadt. In 1968, he habilitated in mathematics and was appointed "Wissenschaftlicher Rat und Professor" the following year. After a guest year at the then Technische Hochschule Wien in 1969/70 as a substitute for Prof. Hans Jörg Stetter, he finally accepted the appointment as a full university professor at TH Wien in 1973 (renamed to TU Wien in 1975).

In the 1970s, Prof. Barth, together with his fellow professors Hans Jörg Stetter, Manfred Brockhaus and Helmut Kerner, built up the computer science program, was later chairman of the computer science study commission for many years, and, together with his assistants, not only took care of an important part of this program, but also always felt responsible for the programming education of other TU fields of study. In his last professional years - after computer science had been established in a more or less stable way - he was able to concentrate on his roots as a scientist again, and wrote numerous nice publications in his three main fields of interest: representation of area intersections, German hyphenation and computer chess. In 1999, Wilhelm Barth retired after 26 years at the TU Wien, but was slow to retire from university duties. Nevertheless, he had much more time for his family, his children and grandchildren.

Prof. Wilhelm Barth was generally regarded as an always hard-working but outwardly modest person. Awards and honoring events had little significance and were rather unpleasant for him. Among his many positive qualities, such as accuracy and determination, reliability and trust in others, and above all uncompromising honesty, one in particular should be pointed out that characterized him quite well: "Brevity is the soul of wit" meant for him the endeavor to express things precisely but compactly. Many of his students learned this essential quality from him and it is an important part of what he truly achieved: he was a role model for many people in many ways! In essence, he has guided several generations of students and assistants towards a solid, straightforward and practical approach to many situations in life. To throw off unnecessary burden and to avoid unproductive aberrations. In this way, his style of working, living and teaching is not only preserved, but lives on multiplied.

Finally, I am personally very grateful to Wilhelm for his generous and unselfish support of my own career, whether by tolerantly overlooking my mistakes, accepting my different ways of leading a group, transferring to me staff assigned to him, or helping me to take on attractive teaching assignments. He was often like a second father to me, and his help contributed significantly to my academic career. His passing fills me with deep sadness, but also with much gratitude! My thoughts are now also with his family and especially with his wife Gisela, to whom I extend my heartfelt condolences.

Werner Purgathofer