



Walter Zeller

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Walter Zeller was Born on June, 13, 1943, in Antofagasta, in the north of Chile. Later on, his family moves to La Unión, in the south of the country, where he is sent to Colegio Alemán to do his elementary education. He continues his studies in the Colegio Alemán of Valparaíso and obtains his secondary Education Diploma in 1960. In 1961 he starts his university studies in the Pedagogical Institute of the Universidad de Chile in Valparaíso and graduates as a Teacher of Mathematics and Physics in 1965.

He begins his academics career at Universidad de Chile, Valparaíso, in 1963, as assistant of Experimental Physics. He then becomes assistant to the Theoretical Mechanics and Electromagnetism courses. Between 1967 and 1976, he becomes Professor of Electrodynamics and Theoretical Mechanics in that institution.

In 1966, he enters the Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, where he lived, worked, studied, suffered and died on May 25, 1996. He worked for that institution nearly 30 years. His academic career in this institution, his lifetime university, can be summed up in a few lines: 1969-1973. Assistant Professor; 1973-1981, Associate Professor; and from that date on, Professor.

In 1971, he enters the University of Pittsburg where he graduates as Master of Science (Physics) in 1972. Throughout his academic career, he published several papers and essays. His early interest in field theory led him to write several papers about Classic Electrodynamics, among which, "Acotaciones sobre Relatividad Especial" ("Notes on Special Relativity"). (1975), a text which was required in special relativity courses intended for undergraduate students of Universidad Católica de Valparaíso Physics Institute of the College of Basic Sciences and Mathematics.

From the eighties on, he starts a new line of inquiry, fluids, which resulted in the publications of "Aproximación al Tratamiento Teórico de la Turbulencia: Ecuaciones de Reynolds y de la Energía" ("Approach to Theoretical Treatment of Turbulence: Reynolds and Energy Equations"), "Análisis de Estabilidad de la Teoría de Mezclas para la Sedimentación de Partículas con Difusión" ("Analysis of Stability of the Compounds Theory for the Sedimentation of Particles with Diffusion"), "Estudio de Estabilidad en Convección Termosalina" ("Study of Stability in Thermosaline Convection") where the stability of this double diffusion phenomenon is studied and the neutral stability curves of thermosaline convection and the separation of saline concentrations strata by well-defined interfaces are shown. It is worth noticing that with these works, Walter opens a research line on the Physics of Fluids and Complex Systems at the Institute of Physics.

Another of his explicit contributions to academic life was his concern for the teaching and training of young researchers in the line of fluids physics acting as committee chair of many graduate thesis written by students pursuing their Master in Sciences in Physics. As a result of this and his research projects, he presented numerous papers at Conferences and published them in national and international journals.

In 1987, following a suggestion made by Prof. Enrique Tirapegui, Walter Zeller, along with the Department of Physics of the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics of the Universidad de Chile and the Center for Non-Linear Physics and Complex Systems of Santiago, organizes for the Universidad Católica de Valparaíso and, in particular, for its Institute of Physics, one of the major events related to non-linear physics, the III International Workshop on Instabilities and Non-equilibrium Structures, where the most distinguished researchers have presented their works. He could organize until the VI Workshop and was co-editor of the proceedings of such scientific meetings.

Whoever knew Walter will have to agree that he was a kind, refined, modest man, whose brilliant, elevated conversation and generosity accompanied him in every step he took in life. This led him to occupy the most varied and important institutional positions at the Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, such as Dean of the College Basic Sciences (1976-1979 and 1984-1986), General Director of Research (1979-1984), Academic Vice-Rector (1986-1990) and Director of the International Affairs Office (1992-1996). Besides, he was a member of countless on- and off-university study committees, such as Member of the Committee for Science and Technology of the Council of Rectors of Chilean Universities (1980-1986).

We would like to conclude with a quote of Walter himself: "Teamwork and the legacy of past history have been essential in the development of projects, programs and activities in the University. The achievements are often a product of these associations in common tasks and an individual alone can hardly claim credit for them".

Let these few words be a testimony of what he left in this university and in the national scientific community. Let his legacy be the emphasis on those "common tasks" which he left us as a mission.

Valparaíso, May 1998

Javier Martinez
Rolando Tiemann
Carlos Wörner