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In memoriam Gerhard Jurzitza (1929–2014)

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Abstract. Mainly personal recollections of a friendship with Gerhard Jurzitza, Professor Emeritus of the University of Karlsruhe, Germany, that lasted more than half a century.

After almost a decade of an increasing deterioration of his health, Professor Emeritus Dr Gerhard Jurzitza (Fig. 1) passed away on 28th August 2014, three months prior to his 85th birthday. He had felt the approaching departure for some time and settled his odonatological legacy during the concluding years of his life, in order to prevent anything from being lost and ensuring that his material will continue to be used intensively. His death will be particularly felt by the odonatological community in Europe, South America and Japan, where the results of his work are most pertinent, whether in the field of scientific odontology or in that of dragonfly photography. An outline of his life, the appreciation of his work and his odonate bibliography appeared 1999 in *Odonatologica* (HEIDEMANN 1999).

Born on 30th November 1929 in Ostrava, the Czech Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia), where he lived until his family was expatriated after World War II, Gerhard had a reasonable command of reading some of the Slav languages, such as Czech, Slovak and Slovenian. This was a considerable advantage in a time when most of the important odonate publications were written in national languages, often without, or with only a brief, indicative (rather than informative) summary in the congress language.

In the 1950s, when Gerhard started his odonatological work, Germany had a number of notable odonatologists. Among these, the 'authorities' were Dr Erich Schmidt (1890–1969) and Dr Paul Münchberg (1905–1999). The latter became Jurzitza's personal friend and, since in his old age he was living

a professionally rather isolated life in Soest (Germany), Gerhard developed the habit of writing to him, over many years until his death, at least one letter a month, whether or not there was any substantial news to report – just as a casual chat from a friend.

Gerhard was in touch, and conducted a regular exchange of reprints, with most of the contemporary German, other European and some overseas Odonata workers. His closer circle of friends included Alois Bilek (1909–1974), Dr Hans Schiemenz (1920–1990), the Swiss Otto-Paul Wenger (1919–1981), and the Czech Professor Dr Vladimír Teyrovský (1898–1980). Upon the death of the last of these, Gerhard passed on to me all his correspondence. I also recollect Gerhard's delight upon the receipt from Dr Schiemenz of a copy



Figure 1. Professor Dr Gerhard Jurzitza giving a lecture on botany in the University of Karlsruhe in the early 1990s. Photo by an unknown student.

of his book (SCHIEMENZ 1954), the market price of which was DM 12.00, an expense which he could not easily afford at that time.

Throughout his active life Gerhard received queries on various scientific and technical problems from numerous young dragonfly students or photographers. He invariably dealt with these with much attention, responded always in great detail and treated the correspondents as respected colleagues, though the submitted questions were often trivial. He never assumed the posture of a senior 'teacher' and never had his own 'odonatological school'. However, many students over the years, including the current generation, consider Gerhard to be a pioneer, whose work opened up to them the fascinating dragonfly world, whose books were helpful in their initial orientation among the species, and in whose scientific papers they found the inspiration and guidelines for their own research. Through this Gerhard has many 'followers' in Germany, as well as elsewhere in Europe, particularly in Spain, and in South America. Somewhat proudly he postulated occasionally that his family roots originated in the old Austrian Empire of Francis Joseph I. This may be one of the reasons for his outspoken interest in the Central- and East-European fauna and for the proverbial precision and reliability of his observations.

Dragonfly photography was one of his great passions. He developed some new techniques and practiced as a dragonfly photographer almost to the very end of his life, though his failing ability to walk in the field restricted him finally to his garden pool only. His photographs were in great demand by the editors and publishers of many German illustrated, popular magazines and also by foreign authors of various dragonfly books. These were always warmly welcomed at his home and enjoyed every kind of hospitality during the days spent selecting the required photographs/slides in Gerhard's very substantial collection. One of these was, for example, Mladen Kotarac, who required Jurzitza's photographs of some species for inclusion in his 'Atlas of the dragonflies of Slovenia' (KOTARAC 1997).

During the final years of his life, Gerhard was unable to travel. This was partly because he felt insecure as a car driver. He had given up his driving licence in the 1990s and thus had to rely on public transport, which inevitably required much walking to the appropriate dragonfly sites. Despite this,

when *Coenagrion armatum* was rediscovered in The Netherlands, he could not refrain from a visit to that country in May 2000, to take some photographs of this species there. The trip was only partly successful as, during this work, his camera fell into the water and could not be mended until his return to Germany. However, we had a tremendous time in Bilthoven. Earlier Gerhard and his wife Grete also visited our home in Switzerland, where he managed to take photographs of his 'desiderata': *Aeshna caerulea*, *Somatochlora alpestris* and *S. arctica*, all from Flumserberg. My wife Marianne and I also collected extensively with Gerhard in Japan.

Throughout his odonatological career, Gerhard helped his colleagues whenever he could. He continued so almost to the very end of his life. His last associates were Lieselotte and Ulrich Röder, who made some video recordings and observations on the endemic *Thermodthemis madagascariensis* in Madagascar. Since they were not qualified odonatologists, Jurzitza helped them to analyze their evidence, gathered together the relative literature and published with them 2004 a paper in *Notulae odonatologicae* (JURZITZA et al. 2004). This was his last scientific publication (Fig. 2); nevertheless, he could never give up his work on dragonflies. As late as 2013, while he was mourning the loss of Grete, he embarked on the study of the nature of spermatodesms in some Malgasian Anisoptera, the material for which was provided by the Röders. At that time he did not have his library at hand any more and was faced, therefore, with some literature problems. Sadly his health failed him and he was unable to bring the project to its conclusion.

Some years prior to his death, Gerhard transferred his Odonata collection to the Senckenberg Museum and donated his rich collection of reprints to Dr Florian Weihrauch.

With the death of Dr Gerhard Jurzitza the world odonatological community has lost a great worker, the International Odonatological Foundation (SIO) a loyal and active Charter member, and many of us an unforgettable friend. His works, along with the two species named after him, *Lestes jurzitzai* Muzón, 1994, and *Neoneura jurzitzai* Garrison, 1999, will perpetuate his name.

Dear Gerhard, thank you so much for more than half a century of friendship, countless talks and phone calls, for hundreds of letters and e-mails,

for your loyalty in hard times and for all the rest, including your frequent assistance in editing manuscripts submitted for publication in *Opuscula zoologica fluminensia*. Some of these manuscripts were composed in a style and language that precluded even their submission to a reviewer, but from your desk they returned as very reasonable scientific texts, containing much clearly presented and valuable information.

Last but not least, our sympathies go to Gerhard's son and daughters: Dr Dieter Jurzitza, Sigrid Stewart and Heidrun Jurzitza and to their families.

Viel Spaß beim Studieren der
Literatur
wünscht
J. Jurzitza

THERMOTHEMIS MADAGASCARIENSIS (RAMBUR): SOME OBSERVATIONS ON ITS HABITAT AND REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR (ANISOPTERA: LIBELLULIDAE)

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Abstract – The sp. is peculiar to Madagascar, where it is restricted to forest ponds at elevations above 900 m. Based on colour field photographs, both sexes (adult) are redescribed. The reproductive behaviour is characterized by scooping oviposition and by incidental multiple guarding.

Some records of *Crocothemis striata* Lohmann are appended.

Introduction

Thermothemis madagascariensis is endemic to Madagascar and it is certainly one of the larg-

Figure 2. The first page of Gerhard Jurzitza's last publication with a handwritten dedication to F. Weihrauch of 02-xi-2011.

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