

Memoir Note About Marian Fijałek, Ph.D. Eng.



Marian Hieronim Fijałek was born on 20 July 1936 in Zamość. He attended primary school and comprehensive high school in his home town. He was a graduate of the Warsaw University of Technology (Faculty of Transport). Fijałek completed his basic professional apprenticeship in the Central Regional Directorate of State Railways (Centralna Dyrekcja Okręgowa Kolei Państwowych) in Warsaw. In 1964, he commenced work in the Research and Development Centre for Railway Technology (Centralny Ośrodek Badań i Rozwoju Techniki Kolejnictwa) and continued his career there until his retirement. He was employed as an engineer, senior assistant, research associate and director of the railway surface lab; for 13 years, Fijałek served as director of the Railway Lines Unit (Zakład Dróg Kolejowych), director of the planning and co-ordination division, coordinator for the test track in Żmigród and for 3 years as director of the track exploitation division. In the meantime, he also completed an apprenticeship with French Railways (SNCF) and in the Parisian metro (RATP). He prepared and defended his Ph.D. thesis at the Poznań Technical University.

His work in the Research and Development Centre for Railway Technology coincided with the period of choosing, testing and implementing the new heavy S60 railway surface by Polish Railways, mechanisation of rail track work and introduction of modern technological processes to the construction and maintenance of rail tracks. This was a period of difficult, but also very substantive, cooperation between railways and industry with respect to the specification of requirements and evaluation of their fulfilment by the industry products delivered for railway companies. It was also a period when the professional competence of the participants of this process was verified in the heat of ardent disputes between railway experts and industry specialists, aimed at finding the most efficient solutions. Marian Fijałek passed such “tests” several times and Polish Railways procured reliable and durable structures for the railway surface. The contemporary choices and implemented projects provided a basis for the further development of such structures and have been reaping rewards until this day. Marian Fijałek definitely made an important contribution in this respect.

As a result of his analytical approach and unique sense of observation of phenomena in Polish conditions – supported by familiarity with rail test tracks in Czech Republic, Russia, Japan and the United States -he accumulated immense knowledge in the area of constructing and using rail tracks, which was an indispensable element for the development of structures and reliability tests of the railway surface and contemporary rolling stock. On behalf of the investor (the Research and Development Centre for Railway Technology), he coordinated the construction of the test track in Żmigród, and subsequently became the director of its exploitation. Fijałek prepared the first rules and regulations for using the track and the first programme of comprehensive tests carried out there. He shared his knowledge in numerous articles and studies

which are used by professionals involved in the exploitation or extension of test tracks for new purposes. At the present moment, only the publications left by him offer access to this specialist knowledge.

He was an exceptional and creative engineer who treated his profession as a beautiful process of creation. His uniqueness resulted from his talents, personality traits and mentality acquired as a result of difficult experiences during childhood – the experiences of a child from the Zamość region. During talks with friends, he often recalled the events during the German occupation in his home town: executions, re-settlements and exiles which he witnessed. He was also shaped by the specific atmosphere and high level of education in the Zamość schools: the primary school and, in particular, the comprehensive high school, which he preferred to call the Zamość Academy. In spite of the fact that he spent a major part of his life (study years and professional years) in Warsaw, he often missed Zamość and the Roztocze region. He recharged his batteries there during annual trips.

Marian Fijałek died after a month-long illness and operations on 30 November 2018 in Warsaw.

In his memory.

Andrzej Gołaszewski
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