

HANS WILLAX : IN MEMORIAM by F.G. Resmini

M. le Président de l'Université de Caen, M. le Recteur de l'Université de Caen, Mme la Vice-Présidente de l'Université de Caen, Ladies and Gentlemen,

on behalf of the International Organizing Committee and the Local Organizing Committee of this Conference, I shall take a few minutes of your time to commemorate an illustrious member of our scientific community, who has just recently passed away : Hans Willax.

It is with deep sorrow and the feeling of a very heavy loss that I am doing so. I am sure that all of you, dear colleagues, will share this sense of loss. Indeed, Hans Willax has served well our scientific community, with his work and his accomplishments.

Hans was only 52 years old, when he left us on April 17th. He was born in Munich on April 12th, 1929. He spent there the first part of his life, his youth marked by the dark years of the war. He studied physics at the Technische Hochschule in Munich, under the guidance of Prof. Maier-Leibnitz. In fact his association with Maier-Leibnitz continued until he received the Ph. D, circa 1958.

Shortly after, the event which was to define the course of all his life : he was called to ETH, Zurich, by Prof. Scherrer, to start work in accelerator physics in anticipation of building a cyclotron. In order to become acquainted with the then new AVF Cyclotron technology, he was sent to LRL, Berkeley, where he spent almost three years from 1959 to 1962. He worked with Dr. E. Kelly who was then building the 88". In the same years he married Stephanie, from Oakland.

Meanwhile, Scherrer had died and his successor, J.P. Blaser, was about to launch the ambitious new SIN project. Thus, upon returning from the States, Hans was put in charge of the design, and later construction of the SIN ring cyclotron. The rest, as all of you know, belongs already to the history of particle accelerators.

The great triumph for Hans, and I am sure one of the happiest day of his life, was on January 18 th, 1974, when a 600 MeV proton beam emerged from the Ring. Shortly after, destiny hit him hard with the premature death of his wife. With the enthusiasm for life which was really Hans Willax trademark, he remarried. He was already father of three and they would become six in a few years.

I think that anybody else, after the great and long effort spent for SIN, would have quieted down. But not him : in the last two years, on leave from SIN, he was working at the German neutron spallation source in Julich. I am told that he was devoting to the new project the same incredible amount of energy that I witnessed him putting, for years, in the construction of SIN.

Besides being an original thinker and such an energetic builder, Hans had a very warm personality. His emphasis on the human side in his relations with collaborators was one of the great traits in his character. This is sometimes a rare quality in scientists. He had plenty of it, as shall always remember those who had the pride and honour of working with him ; I am one of them.

A cruel destiny denied to Hans to reap some of the fruits of a lifelong dedication to science and to savour for a long time, the success he had earned. The illness, and its tragic end, came with swiftness. In only six months everything was over.

Just the week before he died, I visited him in his hospital in Aarau. His mind was sharp and brilliant as ever. We talked, what else, about cyclotrons. But his forces were leaving him. He knew it and told me so with the objectivity of the scientist he was. He knew he would not attend Cyclotron Conferences any more. He asked me to say hallo to colleagues and this is what I have done today.

May I therefore ask you, Ladies and Gentlemen, to stand up with me and observe a 30" silence in honour of Hans Willax.