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Hanspeter Luterbacher

1938 – 2021

Renowned micropalaeontologist and stratigrapher Hanspeter Luterbacher passed away in Barcelona on November 17, 2021, at the age of 84.

Hamper, as we all knew him, was born on January 8, 1938, in Basel, where he studied micropalaeontology under Manfred Reichel. He completed his PhD in 1964 with a thesis on planktonic foraminifera in the Gubbio Cretaceous/Tertiary type section which earned him a «summa cum laude».

After his promotion, he worked for a short period at the Museum of Natural History in Basel to join thereafter the Esso Research European Laboratories in Bordeaux where he worked as a research geologist together with Max Furrer. He was involved in various Exxon exploration projects and in two expeditions of the Deep Sea Drilling Project in the Central Atlantic and the Central Pacific in 1970 and 1973.

In 1977, he followed a call of the University of Tübingen where he became full professor of micropalaeontology, a chair he held until his retirement in 2003. He then returned to Menorca and Barcelona, together with his beloved Spanish wife Magda and his family. There he engaged in many studies, together with his Spanish friends and colleagues Joan Rosell and Jorge Ferrer.

The death of his wife three years ago was a heavy blow to him, from which he finally would not recover.

Hamper became a member of VSP/SASEG in 1965. He was an active member and contributed 4 scientific papers to the Bulletin and presented to the general assembly. His scientific palmarès is worth seeing. He was author

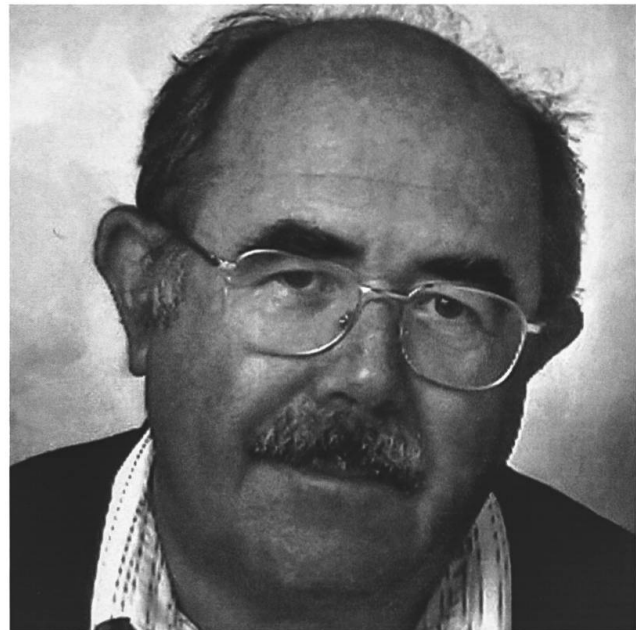


Photo by Wilfried Rönnefeld

or co-author of 47 publications ranging from micropaleontology over sedimentology to regional geology and stratigraphy. Hamper's father was an employee of the Swiss Postal Service in Basel and a strict teetotaler. Having his two sons study at the university – Hamper's brother was a protestant theologian – was a burden for the family and Hamper had to promise that he would not consume any alcohol until the end of his studies. He strictly adhered to this commitment until the day he promoted. After receiving his PhD, a party was given in his honour at the geological institute of the university and with a glass of good wine Hamper declared that he would now be free of his oath. He carefully tasted the wine and as I could observe at many later occasions, it was the quality of the wine that counted for him and not the quantity.

As a student Hamper learned Russian to enable him to spend a few months at the Institute of the Russian Academy of Science at Moscow's Lomonosov University in order to familiarize himself with the Russian mi-

crofauna. With a loan from the University of Basel he bought a train ticket and went off to the Soviet Union. Upon arrival in the Soviet capital he soon realized that the funds he carried, were far too small for the planned stay. Through a letter of introduction to the Swiss ambassador sent by the father of a fellow student of Hamper and a friend of the ambassador, he was invited to stay at the embassy during his studies in Russia. He later often recounted how he got spoiled by the embassy staff.

In the late eighties, I worked for Shell in Spain. I had been invited by Shell Research in Rijswijk to participate in a field seminar in the Southern Pyrenees. The focus of the seminar was the famous Cretaceous/Tertiary Flysch sequence at Tremp. We were some fifteen participants and worked our way up from the base of the section to its top. Half-way up the section, a group of geologists approached us from the top. It was Hamper and Emiliano Mutti with a group of Exxon geologists from Bordeaux doing the same studies as us. For me it was a pleasure to meet Hamper and Emiliano but the rest of the reception was rather competitive and at a distance. In the evening, we found ourselves in the same hotel in Tremp. It was decided that a reconciliation football game Shell vs. Exxon should take place the next day. It was a great match! Hamper was Exxon's goalkeeper, Emiliano Mutti the referee. I do not remember the score of the match but the subsequent party was splendid!

The bond between Hamper and his fellow students was strong. When we learned that he would retire from the university, we decided to surprise him in Tübingen. About a dozen of his colleagues took the train from Basel to be present at his farewell lecture. When we left the train and started walking towards the university, Hamper suddenly appeared. He wanted to meet his sister at the railroad station arriving on the same train. His surprise was obvious when he saw us.

When he realised that all of us came for his farewell, he had tears in his eyes. The party at his home in Tübingen after the official ceremony as well as the guided tour through the paleontological collection of Tübingen University that he gave us the following morning were unforgettable.

With Hamper we have lost a good friend and colleague. We remember him as an extraordinarily humble and outstanding scientist with deep and wide knowledge, a true friend who always had an open door for his fellow students and colleagues. We thank him for his friendship.

Volkmar Pümpin