

In Memoriam

VEIKKO SAAR

(15.04.1971 – 12.09.1998)



Estonian astronomers have suffered a painful loss. One of our most talented and prospective young astronomers, Veikko Saar, died in a tragic accident in Japan, on the coast of the Pacific Ocean on September 12, 1998.

Veikko was born in the family of the well-known astrophysicist Enn Saar. Life at the Observatory brought Veikko into close contact with computers when he was yet a teenager. Veikko became a skilled programmer soon, being at the same time interested in the studies of the vast Universe. And so it happened that a 16-year-old schoolboy was a co-author of a scientific paper devoted to cosmology.

Veikko studied at the University of Tartu. Being a student in the Department of Physics, he succeeded in obtaining a one-year

scholarship for studies in the U.S.A., at the University of Maryland. After his return from America Veikko finished his undergraduate studies by defending his bachelor thesis which was an original description of the large-scale structure of the Universe by fractals. Studies of the large-scale structure were continued in the master thesis which Veikko defended in 1995. In the thesis he proposed a new method for computing the correlation of the clusters of galaxies. This method played a significant role in a number of papers by the astronomers from Tartu Observatory, that eventually led to the discovery of regular patterns in the distribution of the clusters of galaxies on very large scales. Veikko belonged to the working group headed by Jaan Einasto which received the Award of Science of the Estonian Republic in 1998.

Veikko tried to make use of every opportunity to study and work abroad. After defending a master's degree in Tartu, he continued his post-graduate studies at the Oxford University and thereafter at the University of Tokyo. Tokyo became a place for a longer stop for Veikko, since he had married a Japanese girl, Akiko. In the spring of 1998 Veikko became a doctorate student at the University of Tokyo.

But Tõravere and the Observatory here always remained a genuine home for Veikko. He planned to return home and to devote his talent and skills to the development of cosmology in Estonia. Veikko's untimely death left his family, relatives, friends, colleagues from Estonia and from Oxford, Cambridge, Tokyo in deep sorrow.

Astronomers know that bright stars burn out fast. Veikko Saar would have been one of the brightest stars in Estonian astronomy. Unfortunately, he went out before reaching his full brightness. Now we are left with memories only.

Laurits Leedjärv