Prof. Dr. Lasar S. Shvindlerman 70 years



A brilliant scientist with a gentle smile on his face, vivid eyes behind the glasses, and always ready for a joke or a funny remark on the idiosyncrasies of human life that is how we know Lasar Shvindlerman. However, there was not always reason to laugh in his life. On September 20, 1935 Lasar Simha Shvindlerman was born in Gitomir close to Kiew, Ukraine, as the only child of Simha Shvindlerman, a Red Army Officer and his wife Eugenia, a pharmacist.

The auspice of war was already visible on the horizon and soon Europe would become the scene of the most horrible and devastating war of mankind. Still a child he experienced the relocation of his family to Usbekistan to flee the German troops. It was there where he started school and where he developed the desire to live an independent and interesting life, which essentially meant to become a scientist. After the war his father was delegated to Austria which was then occupied by the Red Army. So his family moved along and Lasar went to school in Ebreichsdorf near Vienna before returning to Kiew where he graduated from school and studied Metallurgical Engineering at the Kiew Polytechnic Institute. Having earned his engineering degree he worked for some time in the steel industry before he decided to move to Moscow for doctoral studies at the famous Moscow Institute for Steel and Alloys. His PhD thesis was concerned with thermodynamics of interfaces and was supervised by Prof. Grigorian. At the Institute he also met the lecturer (now professor) Boris Bhokstein, who became a close friend and coauthor of many scientific papers and books. Having decided early to dedicate his life to science he joined the Institute of Solid State Physics at the National Research Laboratory of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Chernogolovka, close to Moscow to work on grain boundary thermodynamics and kinetics. Soon he advanced to become head of the Laboratory of Interfaces in Metals at the Institute. He addressed virtually all issues related to grain boundaries primarily from the perspective of thermodynamics. The seminal work of his group on grain boundary migration, segregation, and wetting now belongs to the classics of grain boundary physics and has shaped the modern understanding of grain boundary structure and behavior.

With the break-down of the Soviet Union Lasar was among the first to visit colleagues in the west and to establish international cooperations on interface science, with Gust in Germany, Faulkner in England, Lojkowski in Poland, etc. Owing to substantial overlap of scientific interests and favourable personal chemistry he teamed up with the Institut für Metallkunde und Metallphysik, RWTH Aachen University to establish a new interface dynamics laboratory dedicated to the measurement, theory, and simulation of the motion of solitary and connected grain boundaries in metals, especially their junctions. Lasar Shvindlerman and coworkers demonstrated by theory and experiment that contrary to common belief there are limitations of curvature driven grain growth and that new options for microstructure control arise from Grain Boundary Junction Engineering.

For this research and the most successful cooperation Prof. Shvindlerman received the Werner-Köster-Award (best paper award) of the Zeitschrift für Metallkunde in 2005. This honor was preceded by the Max-Planck-research award (together with Gust and Fournelle), the Alexander von Humboldt research prize, the Eurodrive Research Award, just to name a few. His research has been published in more than 200 articles in journals and 4 books, and for sure there is much more to come.

Prof. Lasar S. Shvindlerman is not only a dedicated scholar, he is also an excellent teacher and his scientific curiosity is only rivalled by his fantastic memory and goes far beyond interface science. Whether history of science, Agatha Christie's murders or Japanese fairy tales, he read and memorized it all. Needless to say that he will enjoy reading the articles in this issue which are dedicated to him on his 70th birthday, which he celebrated on September 20, 2005. On this occasion we wish him excellent health, splendid humor, personal luck, and much of exciting science ahead.

G. Gottstein, Aachen