

Obituary

Professor Valery Privalko



Valery Pavlovich Privalko was an athlete, a poet, a polyglot-translator, and a renowned thermophysicist and polymer scientist. With great regret and shock we have learned of his sudden and instant death on January 23, 2006, in his hometown of Kyiv.

Valery Privalko was born on November 8, 1940, in the city of Kharkiv, Ukraine. He attended Kyiv Polytechnic Institute (currently, National Technical University), where he was a straight-A student and a member of the Institute's varsity gymnastics team. After graduation from Polytechnic Institute with a degree in Chemical Engineering, he worked for four years at the Research Institute of Machinery for Polymer Processing, and was accepted to a Ph.D. program at the Institute of Macromolecules of the Ukrainian National Academy of Science in 1966. Not only did the young researcher have quickly set himself apart due to his outstanding scientific talent; Privalko impressed everybody who knew him with his wide erudition, intelligence, integrity, and rare combination of strong will and caring concern for the people around him. Valery Privalko accomplished a brilliant scientific career; in his mid-30s, he received his Ph.D. and, later, a Doctorate of Science (the highest scientific degree in the Soviet Union), and became the Chair of the Department of Polymer Thermophysics. He remained the Chair of this Department for almost 30 years, until his death in 2006. During his outstanding scientific tenure, Privalko has published over 350 papers in peer reviewed journals, published 5 monographs that became the textbooks of several generations of polymer chemists and physicists, supervised and groomed 23 Ph.D. students, and earned his reputation as the recognized leader in polymer physics and thermodynamics. He has made significant contributions in the fields of molecular structure and physical properties of polymers, low temperature thermal behavior and fractal structure of polymer glasses, synthesis and physical characterization of semi-rigid chain polymers reinforced with sol-gel derived inorganic nanophase, polymer membranes, and interfacial interactions in

heterogeneous polymer materials, including filled polymers and nanocomposites, polymer blends, block copolymers, and interpenetrating polymer networks. In addition to his responsibilities as chair of the Thermophysics Department at the Institute of Macromolecules, Privalko, has also served as a faculty member of the Physics Departments of Kharkiv State Polytechnic University, Kyiv State University, and Mykolayiv State University.

As a renowned scientist, Professor Privalko was frequently invited to serve as a visiting scientist or lecturer-professor at the most prestigious polymer centers in Japan, Israel, Germany, Spain, Italy, and USA. He co-managed international research programs and was a recipient of numerous national and international scientific awards.

In spite of all his impressive academic achievements, Privalko never looked like a "classic" professor completely immersed in his science. Quite opposite, due to his charisma, sharp humor, and broad erudition, he would quickly become the center of attention in any gathering. In addition to his native Russian and Ukrainian, he was fluent in French and English, knew Japanese and Spanish, read from memory the poems of Goethe and Schiller in German, and himself wrote nice (mostly, humorous) verses in Russian and English. He translated Japanese scientific monographs and papers to Russian, and was a popular language professor at the French and Japanese city courses in Kyiv. He belonged to the famed unbeatable cohort of the table tennis players of the Institute of Macromolecules, and was often seen with his paddle during the lunch breaks. He was the caring father of his two sons and the daughter.

When one of us, in the very late 1980s, was leaving his native country for a new life in the West (and, at those times of the "iron curtain", did not hope to see again any of his friends), Valery Pavlovich said at the farewell party: "Remember me the way I am now". And remembered he is: charismatic, humorous, brilliant, athletic—the Renaissance man of the 20–21st centuries.

Colleagues, friends, pupils:

Dr. Eleonora Privalko, Ph.D., Sr. Scientist, Institute of Macromolecules, Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences, Kiev, Ukraine.

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