

In Memoriam

Andrzej Wieckowski (1945 – 2019)



ANDRZEJ WIECKOWSKI (Polish: Więckowski) passed away on January 31, 2019, in Eugene, Oregon, following a long illness. Wieckowski was an ECS emeritus member and fellow who had been a valued member of the Society for over three decades. During this time, he made momentous contributions as a researcher, a symposium organizer, and a member of multiple Society committees. From 1999 to 2001,

Wieckowski served as chair of the division formerly known as the ECS Physical Electrochemistry Division (now known as the ECS Physical and Analytical Electrochemistry Division). He also served on the ECS Technical Affairs Committee (2001–2005) and the ECS Honors and Awards Committee (2006–2010). He was a member of the ECS Chicago Section and the faculty advisor for the ECS Central Illinois Student Chapter.

Wieckowski was born on February 22, 1945, in Łódź, Poland. He received his MS, PhD, and DSc degrees from the University of Warsaw in 1968, 1973, and 1981, respectively. As a young researcher in Poland, Wieckowski stepped forward to take a highly visible leadership role in the Solidarity Movement while at Warsaw University. He left Poland for North America just two weeks before the imposition of martial law in Poland in 1981, first to Laval University in Quebec City, Canada, then to the University of California, Santa Barbara, to work with Art Hubbard, and finally to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1985. He was an assistant/associate professor of chemistry there from 1985 to 1996 and a full professor from 1996 to 2012. Once at the University of Illinois and, indeed, even before he moved from Santa Barbara to Urbana, Wieckowski had a unique ability to attract students to his group due to his infectious enthusiasm, boundless energy, and excitement for science and cutting-edge experimental approaches.

Wieckowski was known for his fundamental spectroscopic and radiochemical research on the solid-liquid electrochemical interface and electrode surface structure, and for molecular-level studies of surface oxidation and reduction processes applicable to electrocatalytic systems, such as fuel cells. He is particularly known for the development of electrochemical NMR, in collaboration with Eric Oldfield, and for the many applications of this pioneering technique to interfacial electrochemical systems. He also developed and utilized broadband-sum frequency generation, cathodoluminescence-electron energy loss spectroscopy, and electrochemical X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy. He is recognized as the coinventor of the direct formic acid fuel cell. During his long, distinguished career at the University of Illinois, he published over 300 journal articles, which have been cited over 13,000 times.

Wieckowski was a longtime member of both ECS and the International Society of Electrochemistry (ISE). He was also a recipient of many prestigious awards over the course of his career. In 1992, Wieckowski was awarded the U.S. Department of Energy Prize for Outstanding Scientific Accomplishment in Materials Chemistry. He received the ISE Jacques Tacussel Prize in 1998 and the ECS Physical and Analytical Electrochemistry Division David C. Graham Award in 2003. He was appointed an ECS fellow in 2006 and an ISE fellow in 2009. Also in 2006, Wieckowski was awarded the Gold Medal of the ISE. He served for 12 years as a North American editor of *Electrochimica Acta*.

In 2013, ECS member and University of Arkansas professor Ingrid Fritsch gave a talk in honor of Wieckowski during his surprise retirement party at the University of Illinois.

“Andrzej served on my PhD graduate committee from 1985 to 1989,” Fritsch began. “I want to thank him for making a positive impact on many levels.”

Fritsch then explained how Wieckowski had provided her encouragement and support throughout her career.

“I can’t say enough how important it has been to me to see Andrzej’s smiling face at The Electrochemical Society conferences that I’ve attended,” Fritsch said. “Actually, I don’t ever remember *not* seeing him at those conferences. ... Andrzej has always advocated that people ‘get out there’ and be active—help to define what is at the cutting edge of the science and disseminate science to others. This is of course what Andrzej, himself, has done.”

She went on to describe Wieckowski’s exceptional gift for communicating scientific research.

“Andrzej is a fine scientist, not only in doing research, but also in communicating it to others in a comprehensible and convincing fashion,” Fritsch said. “Thus, the science can transcend both the discipline and time; it takes on a kind of immortality.”

In 2014, at the 225th ECS Meeting in Orlando, Florida, a symposium was held in Wieckowski’s honor. There, former ECS president Larry Faulkner, who had first brought Wieckowski to the University of Illinois in 1985, gave a speech celebrating Wieckowski’s illustrious career.

“With his whole life Andrzej has shown commitment to freedom, truth, and professional integrity,” said Faulkner. “These are the fundamental values of science. Andrzej has lived them wonderfully successfully, because he is also a focused man of extraordinary courage.”

Wieckowski is survived by his wife, Teresa; his daughter, Zuzanna; his son-in-law, Taylor; and his granddaughters, Maia, Nicole, and Rachel.

Information for this notice was contributed, in part, by Debbie Myers and Piotr Zelenay.