



November 15, 2022

Remembering Gerhard Ziemer



It was with great sadness when on the night of November 12-13, 2022, I received Jeff Jacobs and Chris Knott-Craig message informing me that Gerhard Ziemer suddenly died. It is a great loss for us Europeans and for our international scientific community.

I met Gerhard for the first time in the early '80s, while I was visiting the Boston Children's Hospital, during his training there. Several contacts followed in occasion for the so-called "Castaneda Society". We eventually met again in Bangkok, in 1989, while attending the 3rd World Congress of Pediatric Cardiology. During our conversation, as we talked about our great experiences that we had with Aldo Castaneda and Bill Norwood, we shared the idea of forming an "European Club", in a similar fashion like the one our colleagues in North America had already established with the Congenital Heart Surgeon's Society (CHSS).

Gerhard Ziemer on his return from Boston to Germany in the late '80s, was soon elected in charge with the Pediatric Cardiac program at the University of Hannover (under the direction of Professor Hans Borst) where he progressed to academic ranks of Professor of Cardiac Surgery.

Since that time, Gerhard had the reputation of being a very skilled and very active Pediatric Cardiac Surgeon internationally. At the same time, he was assisting Prof. Hans Borst in editing the new-born European Journal of Cardiothoracic Surgery (EJCTS). Being in charge with the Pediatric/Congenital manuscripts, he was aware of the current European activities in this field and, furthermore, he had access to all the Center's mailing list which, in a pre-computerized era, it was a great treasure.





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In spring 1991, coasting on the wave of the CHSS success, he called the first meeting of our “club” at the Frankfurt airport. I can recall the first few surgeons who participated, which I will list in alphabetic order: Hakan Berggren, Willem Daenen, Tjark Ebels, Martin Elliott, Vladimir Ilyin, Francois Lacour-Gayet, Haral Lindberg, Bohdan Maruszewski, Heikki Sairanen, Andreas Urban and myself.

The structure of the “European Club” was then created during the first meeting in Frankfurt where Gerhard was unanimously elected the first President. It was with great enthusiasm and great sense of “European partnership” that Gerhard conducted his first four-year Presidentship, leading our “elite club” to become, in the following years, the ECHS foundation, and eventually the well-structured European Congenital Heart Surgeons Association.

Dear Gerhard, we Pediatric Cardiac Surgeons owe you a lot, for having pioneered and having conducted such a great European Association since its birth.

There was a great disappointment among us, when (as did so many other outstanding European Pediatric Cardiac Surgeons) you left Europe to seek better institutional support in the USA. You had in this way demonstrated your immense talent and leadership on both sides of the ocean!

Your remarkable contribution to our European and International scientific community will remain among us as a sign of your acute envision in reaching an ideal which you have fulfilled with great determination. This is your legacy which you are leaving for us and for the future generations.

Giovanni Stellin, M.D.

ECHSA Founding Member

