

Professor David Tannhauser 13/10/1927 - 12/6/2019

David Tannhauser was born in 1927. He grew up until the age of five in Berlin. Following the rise of the Nazis to power, he and his mother migrated to Israel. At the same time, his parents divorced and his father migrated to the USA.

He spent his childhood in Tel Aviv in the 1930s and 1940s. As a teenager, David was active in a rowing club and a gliding club. Gliding became for him a hobby and a passion that accompanied him all his life.

As a child David was nationally outstanding in mathematics. A high school teacher got him interested in physics. In 1947 he enrolled in physics studies at the Hebrew University.

After conscription and participation in the Israeli War of Independence and its end, David continued his studies at the Zurich Institute of Technology (ETH).

In Zurich, our father met his future wife Pia Miglioretto, an ETH graduate in chemistry from a non-Jewish family and the two fell in love.

The two got married in New York in 1955 and David continued his studies for a doctorate at the University of Chicago. His post-doc studies he carried out at the MIT Institute in Boston.

Their children Naomi and Danny were also born in the USA. The third child Yonatan was later born in Israel.

A job-offer from the Technion for the position of a faculty member and researcher in the Faculty of Physics led the family to immigrate back to Israel in 1961 and settle in Haifa.

At the Technion he was a researcher and a lecturer. His research field was that of solid-state conductivity, he also worked with a Siemens research grant on the development of fuel cells (scientific resume of his colleagues below).

At the latter stages of his career, he specialized in Atmospheric Physics and taught second-degree students in the field.

After the death of his beloved wife Pia in 2002, he moved to Jerusalem and lived there until his death in 2019, cared for by his family.

Professor David Tannhauser professional resumé – prepared by his former colleagues Professors Steve Lipson and Ilan Riess

As can be seen from his publication list, David worked for many years in the field of point defects in solids in particular oxides and on ionic conductivity in solids.

He was well-known in the field internationally and had many collaborations, not only with his graduate students. His most cited publications concern conductivity in metallic and rare-earth oxides.

As well as in his specific field, David also took interest in general physical problems, and as his retirement approached, he lectured to students on optics and is a co-author of the third edition (1996) of “Optical Physics”, a textbook published by Cambridge University Press. Moreover, his interest in gliding led him to take his last sabbatical leave working in meteorology at a laboratory in the Pyrenees. As a result of this, on returning to Technion he initiated a lecture course on Atmospheric Physics, which became one of the most popular courses offered by the faculty, and he was pressed to repeat it periodically for a decade, until 2005.

He also participated for several years after retirement in research on pattern formation in thin films of water during evaporation. His great knowledge of thermodynamics contributed most significantly to understanding the dynamics of the interesting patterns formed in this system, which reminded him of similar features observable in growing metallurgical systems. He presented this work at a conference in southern Brazil in 1996 and took the opportunity to spend a week in the Pantanal National Park and to visit the Foss d’Iguazu waterfall, the largest in the world, on the Brazil-Argentina border.

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