

OBITUARY - Prof. Dr. GÜNAY ÖZMEN



It is with deepest sorrow that we announce the passing of our dear friend and colleague Prof. Dr. Günay Özmen on April 11, 2024.

Prof. Özmen served on the Editorial Board of the Turkish Journal of Civil Engineering (TJCE, formerly Teknik Dergi) for approximately twenty years and on the TJCE Advisory Board established in 2021. He also served as a reviewer for a number of manuscripts considered for publication and edited

the English abstracts of the Turkish manuscripts accepted for publication for a period.

Prof. Özmen was born in 1934 in İstanbul. After completing his secondary education in Kabataş Boys High School, he studied civil engineering in the Faculty of Civil Engineering at İstanbul Technical University. Following his graduation in 1956, he joined the same faculty as an assistant in the Chair of Structural Mechanics. He received his PhD in 1963, became associate professor in 1968 and full professor in 1973. He was awarded a fellowship by the Research Council of Norway in 1963, upon which he carried out post-doctoral work in Norway and England. He retired from the university in 1984, but despite his intentions to conclude his academic activities, he could never detach himself completely from the academic world. During his period of engineering practice after retirement, he continued his research and publication activities, besides lecturing various courses on computer applications in the Civil Engineering and Architectural programmes of the Graduate School of İstanbul Technical University.

Prof. Özmen authored close to twenty publications, including books, theses, and lecture notes mainly in two areas-structural and dynamic analyses of multistorey building structures and computer applications in engineering-besides dozens of technical papers he published locally and internationally.

While acting as the Coordinator of Computational Activities at Ata İnşaat, a leading construction firm, Prof. Özmen contributed to the successful completion of the Atatürk Dam. Upon completion of the dam, he left Ata İnşaat in 2000 and resumed his software development activities in Bilsar, a pioneering data processing company Prof. Özmen and a few colleagues had founded in 1975.

Besides teaching, Prof. Özmen assumed responsibility in various administrative tasks in İstanbul Technical University, such as Director of the Computer Centre, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Civil Engineering, Executive Board Member of the İTÜ Development Foundation, Executive Board Member of the İTÜ Athletic Club, and President of the İTÜ Athletic Club Foundation.

Furthermore, he contributed to several activities in the Turkish Chamber of Civil Engineers. Apart from his participation in the TJCE Editorial Board, Prof. Özmen took part in the Professional Engineering Committee and delivered numerous lectures within the framework of continuing education.

Prof. Özmen was a fine gentleman who combined traditional İstanbul manners with a sharp sense of humour. He was one of the very few gentlemen I called “ağabey”, a term which implies respect besides friendliness.

When I first met him in the early seventies, İstanbul Technical University had the traditional “chair system” where head of the chair was a “demigod” while we had rather liberal academic relations in the Middle East Technical University. Before the YÖK (Higher Education Council, founded 1982) era, Turkish universities did not have much interaction with each other, neither academically nor socially. Conference trips were the main occasion for the academia to develop amicable ties. Indeed, I met Günay Ağabey on one of these trips.

The following anecdote is an example of Prof. Özmen’s sense of humour and an indication of the unwritten rules of academic life in Turkey half a century ago. On the occasion of the 1978 European Earthquake Engineering Conference, we had an enjoyable and adventurous coach tour to Dubrovnik. It was Prof. Dr. Rifat Yazar who usually organised these trips where I had a chance to establish a number of valuable friendships. This elderly gentleman was a senior professor, a polite yet influential personality, a kind of godfather of the Turkish earthquake engineering community at the time. He had good contacts with the earthquake engineering circles in Eastern Europe. He was the natural leader of the Turkish delegation in the earthquake engineering conferences. During our trip to Dubrovnik, Prof. Yazar instructed the driver to make a detour and follow a different route (*suggested by his wife Hadiye Hanım, so says gossip*). Displeased with the change, Günay Ağabey told me: “Ask him to stick to the original route, it is shorter and more pleasant.” I was surprised. “Who am I?” I asked. “Merely an outsider, a humble associate professor from another university. Why don’t you tell him yourself?” He replied with a mischievous smile: “That’s the point, mate. He is my senior, I dare not to challenge his decision, but being a stranger, you can very well do it!” Naturally, I turned down the request.

The Editorial Board acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Prof. Dr. Günay Özmen to the Turkish Journal of Civil Engineering and wish to extend their sincerest condolences to his family.

Dr. Tuğrul Tankut, Professor Emeritus
On behalf of the Editorial Board