



## **Peter G. O. Freund**

b. 7<sup>th</sup> September 1936

d. 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018

With deep sorrow, the Faculty of Physics and the Research Center in Theoretical Physics of the West University of Timișoara inform you that Professor Peter George Oliver Freund passed away after a long illness. Peter G. O. Freund was a professor at the University of Chicago, the first Doctor Honoris Causa of our University and a distinguished member of our Academic community.

Peter G. O. Freund was born in Timișoara on 7th September 1936 in a family of upper class Jews (his father was a medic and his mother was an artist at the Opera house in Timișoara) who ensured the provision of a thorough scientific and humanistic education for their son, despite the anti-semitic campaigns carried during the political regime of Antonescu.

He attended the classes of the C. D. Loga highschool. Afterwards, he enrolled at the Electrotechnical Faculty of Timișoara, from where he graduated in 1958. Afterwards, he dedicated himself to the study of physics by participating at the seminars started by Professors G. Vrânceanu (from

Bucharest) and N. Mihăileanu (from Timișoara, who later went to Bucharest). Here he became familiarized with the Kaluza-Klein theories, which represented the starting point of his entire scientific activity.

During this entire period, he was under constant surveillance from the communist secret service because of his deep anti-soviet feelings and his participation in various anti-communist meetings in Hungary and Timișoara in 1956. In 1959, he successfully expatriated himself together with his entire family. He soon arrived in Vienna, where W. Thirring immediately accepted him as a PhD student. After defending his thesis in 1960, he continued his scientific works and in 1965 he was offered a position at the Physics Faculty of the University of Chicago, one of the most prestigious universities of the world, where he remained for the rest of his life.

During his career, he brought important contributions to theoretical physics, having a broad spectrum of interests from hadronic phenomenology to studying the magnetic monopole and further to general non-Abelian Kaluza-Klein theories with generalizations in supersymmetries and superstrings theories. In the field of Mathematical Physics, he worked on quantum groups and especially on supersymmetries, bringing important contributions towards their classifications. The theoretical contributions brought by Freund played an important role in the development of modern unifying theories based on strings and superstrings.

Drawing from his broad humanistic and artistic background, he wrote with humor and wisdom short and interesting stories about remarkable events and persons that he came across during his life (these were predominantly published in the online literary journal *Exquisite Corpse*).

Professor Peter G. O. Freund was a very important friend of the West University of Timișoara, being the recipient of very first Doctor Honoris Causa award from the University in 1996. On the occasion of his visits in his birth town, Timișoara (of which he is an honorary citizen since 2014), he was the first to offer scholarships for PhD studies in Theoretical Physics at the University of Chicago, thus kick-starting a collaboration which will continue for more than a decade, until he passed away due fatal illness. During this time and with the support of the Schrödinger Institute of Vienna, he organized the Schrödinger seminars series, which were hosted for 10 years at the Physics Faculty of the West University of Timișoara, since 2006. Of the personalities invited by Prof. Freund and who presented at these seminars, we recall: Walter Thirring, Herman Nicolai, Leo Kadanoff, Lars Brink and Michael Duff, who are all renowned physicists.

Considered one of the most important theoretical physicists of the world, the passing away of Professor Peter G. O. Freund represents an immense loss for both the international and the Timișoara scientific communities.