Wolfgang-Martin Boerner—The Mentor
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We remember Wolfgang for, among other things, attending countless workshops, conferences, and meetings; promoting radar polarimetry; and, with endless energy and passion, bringing together scientists and researchers from around the world.

His presentations and talks were legendary and unpredictable—often, making the life of the session chair very difficult. As an observer, he could generally be found sitting either in the front or back row and stayed from the opening until the final presenter; he always had a question to pose and never tired of offering vivid comments concerning the importance of polarization in radar remote sensing. He was respected and “feared” by younger scientists, because of his strong personality and reputation for being a very critical and candid observer.

Although his comments were not always positive, he motivated young scientists with suggestions and advice about where they should focus scientifically, whose work and papers they should read, and with whom they should collaborate. He generously and openly shared his trove of international contacts with young scientists and encouraged them to interact with other scientists around the world. He seemed to know everyone in the field of polarimetry, and he never hesitated to bring students and younger researchers to the attention of senior scientists, bridging different generations and cultures.

In this way, Wolfgang introduced novice scientists to the respected polarimetry experts who authored the papers they had already read many times. His goal was integrating everyone into the “polarimetric family”; he even served as a kind of grandfather to this international family. He opened for us new perspectives not only on the scientific world but also on the real world.

He followed the progress of young scientists from workshop to workshop and conference to conference, praising their progress and encouraging them to overcome problems and continue working hard. He never allowed us to give up in difficult moments. He himself—with his energetic and tireless confidence and commitment to the promotion of polarimetry—set the best example for students and young professionals. He was a real mentor at a time when the importance of mentoring was not yet well established. We, all his co-strugglers, were formed by his ideas—in particular, his belief that polarimetric radar and remote sensing collaboration will improve the world (Figure S2).

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Figure S2. Prof. Boerner arguing for the importance of polarization in radar remote sensing during the first POLinSAR workshop hosted by the European Space Agency at the European Space Research Institute, Frascati, Italy, 2003.

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