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OBITUARY P. KALV (1934-2002)

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OBITUARY P. KALV (1934–2002)

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On the first night of the year 2002 a small community of Estonian astronomers suffered a painful loss; after a long and incurable disease a director of Tallinn observatory and a former senior scientific research associate of Tartu Observatory Peep Kalv died.

Peep Kalv was born in Tallinn on November 25, 1934. He started his education in the 21st secondary school in 1945. Ten years later he graduated from the 20th Tallinn secondary school and entered the physical and mathematical department of Tallinn Pedagogical Institute. In 1962 he started his PhD scholarship in celestial mechanics in the former Institute of Physics and Astronomy of the Estonian Academy of Science. Originally it was planned that he would concentrate on the development of two-colour stellar photometry and its application for statistical studies in selected celestial areas, as this topic formed a subdivision of a vast research theme ‘structure and evolution of the Universe’ investigated in the Institute at this time. However, a substantial delay with the acquirement of astrophotometric cameras planned for implementation of this project as well as the considerable burden of business duties in the post of a vice-director of the Estonian branch of the Astronomical–Geodetic Society forced him to interrupt his PhD studies and to change his scientific profile. In 1967, with the instalment in the Glehn dome in Tallinn observatory of a 48 cm Maksutov telescope, P. Kalv started his career of an observing astronomer. In the autumn of the same year 1967 the telescope was equipped with the UBV stellar photometer (designed and manufactured by E.-M. Maasik, Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics), later augmented by filters in $H\alpha$ and R colour, and P. Kalv began systematic photoelectric observations of eclipsing binaries and intrinsic variables (mostly cepheids) which lasted for more than 30 years uninterrupted. During these long years he provided systematic observations of roughly 50 objects in 1321 observing nights, mostly long-period eclipsing variables, Be stars, cepheids, symbiotic stars and finally some relativistic objects. His colleagues V. Harvig, Ü. Kestlane and his wife L. Kalv assisted in his observations. A dozen objects with strong evidence for the presence of emitting gas visible in $H\alpha$ were among his favourites. These were V367, V448, AO, BM,GG, RX, SX Cassiopea, RY Geminorum, CQ Cephei, UU, TW Cancri and X Persei with orbital periods ranging from several days to more than half a year. For all these objects he received full light curves. He became a real expert in stellar photometry by painstakingly studying the effects of atmospheric extinction, all kinds of instrumentation intricacy connected with the temporal changes in a colour system, etc.

While making a reduction of photometric observations, he never credulously followed recipes from manuals, even the most respectable. He worked out his own method of determination of the orbital periods of variable stars and designed an original two-channel stellar photometer which has been installed in Tallinn Observatory. Under his supervision a small group of investigators successfully worked with the photoplate collection from Tartu Observatory searching for variable stars in selected areas. P. Kalv's merits of a dedicated and experienced observer did not remain unnoticed; he was elected a member of the International Amateur-Professional Photoelectric Photometry (I.A.P.P.P.).

In 1980, P. Kalv successfully submitted his PhD thesis. The hard core of his dissertation constituted an in-depth analysis of the nature of the intrinsic variability of RX Cas, a long-period eclipsing binary, most probably involving also a relativistic object. Investigation of RX Cas became a topic of productive discussions between P. Kalv and a world-renowned specialist in astrophysics and a veteran of binary star research, a former director of Sternberg Astronomical Institute in Moscow, Professor D.A. Martynov who also dedicated many years to investigation of this peculiar object.

For a number of years, P. Kalv remained an untiring lecturer at both the Pedagogical Institute and the Tallinn Technical Institute (now the Tallinn Technical University), the head of the Estonian astronomical society 'Vega' uniting both amateurs and professional astronomers. The merits of P. Kalv as an enthusiast of a popular astronomy are invaluable. He wrote more than a hundred popular articles dedicated to various topics of stellar and galactic astrophysics, planetary research and cosmogony, published mostly in the Estonian popular magazine *Horisont* and led thousands of excursions to the Glehn dome. He initiated the regular summer gatherings of 'Vega' members with expeditions to various places in Estonia, notably the islands of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa.

Numerous friends, colleagues and pupils will keep a memory of Peep Kalv as a dedicated professional observing astronomer, as a gifted lecturer and pedagogue and as a real gentleman who always kept his promises, was able to solve his problems with a friendly smile on his face but never created them for other people. Peep Kalv was a unique and vital personality; his high-quality observations outlive him with certainty. His spirit still hovers somewhere in the outskirts of Tallinn under the Glehn dome, which became deserted on the first day of the second year of the third millennium.