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## **Egbert Meisenburg (26.6.1937 – 29.12.2023)**

### **An obituary**



Siegfried Schönle  
Seevetal, ca. 2006/07

by Siegfried Schönle [Original article in German is [here](#). Translation by [DeepL](#)]

"...who is interested in that?" This was the meaning of the deceased's quickly formulated and dismissive comment when the author wanted to ask Egbert Meisenburg a few questions about him on the phone in around 2006, but then another personal meeting over coffee and cake in Seevetal ensued.

It will be difficult to summarise a life of 86 years that has now come to an end in just a few lines, and it will certainly not be possible to describe almost 60 years of chess in this obituary.

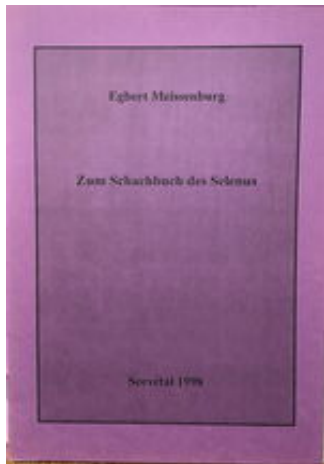
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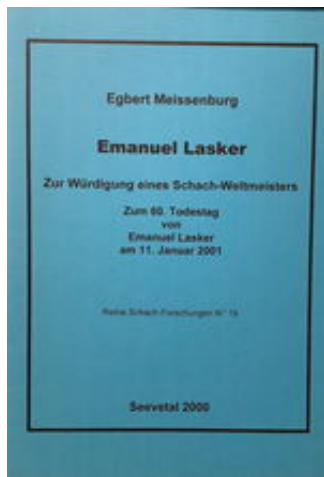
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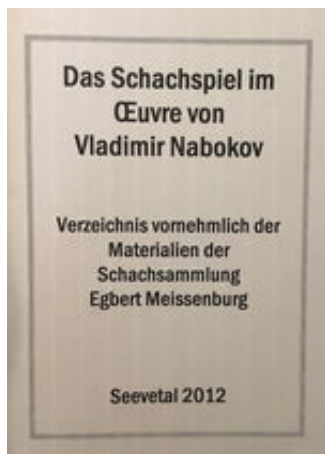


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Egbert Meissenburg was born on 26 June 1937 in Kolberg, a Pomeranian harbour town, now Kolobrzeg, in the north of Poland on the Baltic Sea. He spent around eight years there until his parents had to flee at the end of the Second World War in March 1945. The family moved to Hahndorf near Goslar (Harz), where the eight-year-old attended school after a while. In 1952, an uncle gave him his first chessboard and in the same year he also received his first chess textbook - one by Alfred Brinckmann, as he recalled. He only visited the Goslar chess club a few times, partly because the journey from Hahndorf to Goslar at game times was too inconvenient.

After finishing school, Egbert Meissenburg began studying law in Hamburg, continued his studies in Cologne and Freiburg im Breisgau and finished them in Hamburg. At that time, the round leather was still interesting and the student was also active as a cross-country skier. He initially worked at the Higher Regional Court in Celle.

He spent his first guest clerkship at the labour court in Bamberg for about 2 months. There he lived in the house of the grandmaster Lothar Schmid, partly because his chess interests were already very pronounced. He had access to all parts of Lothar Schmid's collection and documented this in a "Teilverzeichnis der Schachbibliothek Lothar Schmid (Bamberg) nach dem Stande vom 30. Mai 1965..." [aucta no. 764]. His pronounced interest in chess bibliography soon became apparent and he was not to lose it in the following decades, but rather intensify it. The grandmaster's library obviously impressed him so much that his visit resulted in a second essay in 1968, which was published in the commemorative publication for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bamberg Chess Club under the title "Eine Schachbibliothek in Bamberg" [aucta no. 779].

At this point his intensive collaboration on the catalogue "Bibliotheca Van der Linde-Niemeijeriana aucta et de novo descripta. A catalogue of the chess collection in the Royal Library, The Hague" [which contains 26 titles in his name] and the galley proofs for this catalogue can still be studied in his library today.

His second guest clerkship took place at the Administrative Court in Berlin. Whenever the law became too boring for him, the young trainee lawyer occupied himself in the state library or other places of books, of course always in search of chess.

He became a lawyer in 1968 and a notary in 1973. At the end of the seventies, he met his wife, whom he married in 1984. Egbert Meissenburg ended his professional life in 2003.

He found his first job in Winsen/Luhe (near Hamburg), which is why his publications from this period bear this name. The young lawyer also played party chess on Sundays in the local club and when this became too time-consuming, he turned to correspondence chess. He started in the first class and played his way up to the main tournament. Unsurprisingly, these chess activities were also reflected in bibliographical publications. These include the publications "Die Geschichte des Fernschachspiels bis 1800" [aucta no. 768] or, to demonstrate his second main interest, "Aus der Bibliographie unseres Spieles: Krefelds Beiträge zur Fernschachgeschichte" [aucta no. 771].

Researcher, collector, bibliographer, publisher ...

The history of chess, its bibliographical research, chess and other fields of knowledge such as psychology, mathematics, computer science, philosophy, art, philology, chess in fiction, other sub-areas could still be mentioned, formed the diverse centre of his research in the decades after his studies and also until a few years before his death, and he was by no means of the opinion that everything had been researched so slowly.

It is astonishing to recall that early collecting areas are difficult to associate with chess in the main. He diligently collected books on the history of libraries and "The most beautiful books..." in Winsen and whether a bibliography [Josef Hegenbarth - Bibliographie des Illustrationswerks, von Egbert Meissenburg. From: Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel: 8.1968, p. 165-172] on the book illustrator Josef Hegenbarth is to be called a "misstep" next to the chessboard, should not be decided here.

A collector also lives from his diverse contacts and that meant then and to a limited extent today: writing letters! And for some years now, mainly: typing emails!

Let the reader embark on a short (name) journey through Europe, a chess journey, of course, starting in the north.

Denmark: B.B. Jensen;

Sweden: A. Hildebrand;

Latvia: I. Blans;

GDR: Joachim Petzold;

Poland: J. Gizycki;

Russia: Nikolai Sakharov, I. Linder, Y. Averbakh;

Hungary: Arpad Földeak;

Austria: Ernst Strouhal, M. Ehn;

Italy: A. Sanvito, F. Pratesi, G. Ferlito, A. Chicco;

Switzerland: R. Blass;

France: J. Mennerat;

Belgium: A. Floh;

Netherlands: M. Niemeijer, Chr. Bijl;

Great Britain: K. Whyld, M. Mark;

Spain: R. Calvo

Germany: Herbert Wellenhofer, Gerd Meyer, Lothar Schmid, Horst Helten, Helmut Faust, Willi Summ, Maria Schetelich, Gerhard Josten, Renate Syed - and since every journey has an end, let this one come to an abrupt end.

The chess library in Seevetal, formerly Winsen/Luhe, astonished numerous visitors with the abundance and variety of chess material. Leafing through the guest book, the following names can be found, among others: F. Schwenkel, W. Harenberg, O. Dietze, L. Schmid, H. Helten, Seegebarth, M. Eder, H. Balló, D. Steinweder, B. Grünberg, Marianne and Hans Krieger, Hans and Barbara Holländer, M. Mittelbach, G. Josten, S. Schönle, P. Banaschak, G. Meyer and N. Frieberg.

If this list mentions the visitors to Seevetal, it is also worth remembering the visits that the researcher paid to other private chess libraries. These visits, motivated in different ways, are listed here: L. Schmid (Bamberg), Thomas Thomsen (Königstein), M. Mittelbach (Hamburg), G. Meyer (Lübeck), H.-J. Fresen (Bochum), Hans Krieger (Hamburg), Hess and Summ (Frankfurt), S. Schönle (Kassel), B.B. Jensen (Bronshøj), Christian Bijl (NL), M. Eder (Kelkheim) and E. Bachl (Worms).

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Siegfried Schönle

Kornik Library, October 2003

From his extensive work, the "Chess Book Reviews" (1967 – 1971) should be highlighted and, above all, the "Chess Scientific Research (1972 – 1975), which was formative for German chess research". This chess research continued steadily in 1975 until the end of his life and led to the impressive list of over 74 publications according to the German National Library / Frankfurt, the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Library / Lower Saxony State Library mentions 50 titles and the catalog of the KB-Haag under the entry - Egbert Meissenburg - even 95 entries. These include topics on Stefan Zweig's chess novella, a favorite subject of the deceased, the genesis of new chess and developmental tendencies in the medieval Western game of chess. Biographical studies on S. Tarrasch, Em. Lasker and van der Linde were replaced or interrupted by work on questions of the original chess.

"From 2 to 4 August 1991, Dr Thomsen, who always sought the cooperation of renowned scholars from various disciplines, welcomed 14 chess historians to his home in (Hesse) to discuss questions of the origins and early history of chess. The participants included GM Juri Awerbach ..., IM Ricardo Calvo, Irving Finkel, GM Lothar Schmidt, Isaak Linder and Egbert Meissenburg. This first meeting gave rise to the so-called "Initiativgruppe Königstein" [Königstein Initiative Group], which was dedicated to researching the early history of chess. Since then, the members of the group have conducted and published important studies on chess history and emphasised the importance of chess historical research (see: Egbert Meissenburg, "Einige Fakten, Daten und bibliographische Angaben über die Initiativgruppe Königstein (IGK)", in: G. Josten, Über den Ursprung des Schachs, Cologne 2006). The "Okkasionelle Rundbrief", published by Egbert Meissenburg, and "Scacchia Ludus", published by Hans Holländer and Ulrich Schädler (Aachen 2008) should be mentioned here." (Ulrich Schädler)

Egbert Meissenburg enriched several meetings of the CCI and the IGK with his expert lectures. Above all, his multiple research trips to the Biblioteka Kórnicka, Polska Akademia Nauk, to work in the chess library of Tassilo von Heydebrand and der Lasa (see title!) should also be remembered here.

E. Meissenburg presented a kind of interim assessment of his diverse work in 1987. He called them "Ungelesenes und Gelesenes 1962 – 1987. 25 Jahre Schachschreiben – Schachverlegen – Schachübersetzen. Selbstbibliographie ohne biographische Daten." ["Unread and Read 1962 – 1987. 25 years of chess writing – chess publishing – chess translation. Self-bibliography without biographical data."]  
We would like to point out this 80-page brochure, which, like most of his publications, can be viewed in major libraries.

The collector Egbert Meissenburg has been continuously writing the acquisition list of his holdings since 1958. He had the first fourteen years bound in blue half-leather. Every year a new directory was created and the counting of acquisitions starts at one. His chess collection, which is very important for Germany and also on a global scale, has been described several times. In chronological order, first in Walther

Gebhardt >Spezialbestände in deutschen BibliothekenMitteilungsblatt der Bibliotheken in  
NiedersachsenHandbuch der historischen Buchbestände in Deutschland

In his life he not only met well-known personalities from the chess scene. In Hamburg A. Buschke, whose chess antiquarian bookshop was certainly also a source for expanding his own holdings. Long before the border was opened, he had good contacts with Prof. Joachim Petzold and it is also worth mentioning that he met Dr. Meindert Niemeijer met in the Royal Library in The Hague. The KB is one of the numerous libraries in which Egbert Meissenburg spent days and weeks researching; it is one of many whose chess collections he certainly knew very well.

After around 60 years of collecting, it is understandable that towards the end he no longer had any particularly strong desire to acquire and his creative power also waned.

The author of this obituary owes the deceased a great deal over the course of around 30 years. Always generous and helpful with all inquiries, always open to sharing his insights with me and anyone interested. The fact that around 50 contributors from Europe came together in the commemorative publication on the occasion of his 70th birthday can be seen as a sign of his appreciation as a scientist and person. It remains to be hoped that many people who are enthusiastic about the cultural history of chess in all its facets will remember it fondly and for a long time.

We express our sincere condolences to his wife and all family members.

Siegfried Schönle, January 2024

[The text of this obituary follows in part the biographical comments in: Schönle, Siegfried [ed.].  
Festschrift für Egbert Meissenburg. Schachforschungen. Vindobona (Vienna), edition: 2008/2009:  
Refordis Verlag]