

2013-05-21

Obituary of Lothar Schmid



Michael Negele has provided an obituary of our late member **Lothar Schmid** as well as a series of photos from his archive, and Tony Gillam has contributed some memories of the friendship of Lothar Schmid and Ken Whyld.

Lothar Schmid Chess player, collector, publisher



Lothar Schmid, Baron

Thassilo von Heydebrand und der Lasa with his wife Dorothée as well as Yuri Averbakh and Ken Whyld during the 1st International *von der Lasa* Conference of Chess Historians at Kórnik Castle (Poland), September 2002.

This was the order in which Marion Faber expressed her appreciation of the achievements of the *doyen of chess collectors* – who died on May 18th, 2013, eight days after his 85th birthday – in "Librarium", the magazine of the Swiss Society of Bibliophiles in 1980 [[Faber article](#)]. I am not competent to judge the merits of the OTB and correspondence chess grandmaster who liked to call himself, with characteristic understatement, a *hobby player*, or likewise the merits of the most diplomatic arbiter of memorable matches. Therefore my focus is directed on the passionate collector. The interested reader may refer to an interview in SCHACH 6/1998 which records the essential aspects of an exceptional chess career.



Visit to Bamberg, June

2001 Matthias Limberg, Hans-Jürgen Fresen, Jurgen Stigter, Lothar Schmid

In 1952, after his law studies, Lothar Schmid joined the [Karl-May-Verlag](#) founded in 1913 by his father, Dr Euchard Albrecht Schmid (†1951), in Radebeul (near Dresden), and its representation in Bamberg respectively. This subsidiary was managed by the three brothers Joachim (1920-2003), Roland (1930-1990) and Lothar Schmid.

The author met the latter in person at the Lasker Congress in Potsdam in January 2001. At that time the vital septuagenarian was leading the company together with his son Bernhard, and it was difficult for me to distinguish what he had his heart more set on: the publishing business, whose 100th anniversary on 1st of July will now be clouded by Schmid's death, the extensive Karl May estate whose potential sale and Schmid's ideas of price together caused public discussion later on [1], or on the "largest chess collection in private hands", diligently accumulated for more than 50 years. The last, in particular, gave Schmid an outstanding special position, compared with the other two collections comparable in extent and importance, namely that in Cleveland (OH), passed on to the local Public Library in 1928 by the lawyer John G. White, and that of Dr jur. Meindert Niemeijer (†1987), already transferred during his lifetime (1948) as *Bibliotheca Van der Linde-Niemeijeriana* to the Royal Library in The Hague, that are open to the public. Over the decades, however, Bamberg turned into the Mecca for all chess bibliophiles, and many a visitor regarded the abundance there as "the Holy Grail", the owner himself by then having hardly an overview of it. L.S. (Bamberg) attracted like a strong magnet all items connected in any way with chess: books, paintings, chessmen and boards, chess clocks, stamps and medals with chess motifs, as well as unique items such as manuscripts, diaries and autographs. He quickly took possession of the complete estates of deceased masters, functionaries or collectors; but the grandmaster was always willing to provide information if it was a matter of available, well-assorted factual knowledge. The search for a hidden stored book or document however could come to nothing due to the immense dimensions of the accumulated items. Now the sad realisation comes over me, that I have definitively missed his repeated offers to visit Bamberg. The worldwide community of chess collectors will wish to keep our doyen in their memories as we last saw him at the meeting of the Ken Whyd Association in Braunschweig in November 2011: charming and courteous, with a blazing enthusiasm for extraordinary things on and at the borders of the 64 squares.

Michael Negele

[1] See [Winnetous Erben – Wer bekommt Karl Mays Nachlass?](#) and [Der silberne Löwe wird jetzt](#)

[versilbert](#) (articles from FAZ 10/04/2008).

A German version of the above obit will be published in *SCHACH - Deutsche Schachzeitung* 6/2013.



Lothar Schmid giving a simul at Klittich-Pfankuch (Braunschweig, June 2001). Among the GM's opponents you see Peter Anderberg (in the left corner) and Jurgen Stigter. Standing, you can identify Norbert Fieberg (looking to the camera) and Godehard Murkisch

Tony Gillam has one or two memories of the friendship of Lothar Schmid and Ken Whyld, from comments made by both of them:

They were great friends for many years. Ken's younger son, when in his late teens, spent a month one summer living at Lothar's home in Bamberg. Ken "repaid" Lothar by giving him a scrapbook by Lowenthal of one of his columns.

Ken also gave Lothar an almost complete collection of Huttmann's leaflets from around 1840, collected by the Nottingham player Sigismund Hamel. These leaflets have been the subject of articles in *The Chess Stalker Quarterly*.

Only a few years ago, when Lothar was asked to name the rarest item in his library, he said the Huttmann leaflets.

The last few years of *The Chess Players' Chronicle* are extremely rare. Lothar's incomplete collection of those years came from Ken.

Ken's older son Martin told me that he could remember a trip to the very picturesque Lathkill Dale in Derbyshire. Lothar and Ken were walking ahead of him, alongside the stream, singing or whistling "The Trout".

When Ken died, Lothar travelled from Bamberg to Ken's home. I was there that day helping to sort out Ken's stock of books for sale. Lothar spent half an hour sitting alone in Ken's office, just remembering his friend.

Tony Gillam

Moreover we link an [excerpt](#) from Sarah Hurst's interview **A Walk on the Whyld Side** (CHESS November 1998) which sheds additional light on this friendship.

A bibliophilic portrait of Lothar Schmid was written as early as 1965 by Angelika Hübscher, published in the "Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel – Frankfurter Ausgabe" – Nr. 31, 21 April 1965, pp. 721-724 – here is a [scan](#) of this interesting contribution (in German).

Below some more photographs (archive Michael Negele):



[Klittich-Pfankuch auction, Braunschweig, June 2003](#) Lothar Schmid, Henri Serruys, Matthias Limberg, Geurt Gijssen, Hans-Jürgen Fresen

Lothar Schmid also attended our KWA general meeting in Forchheim 2004, here the link to our [pictorial report](#).

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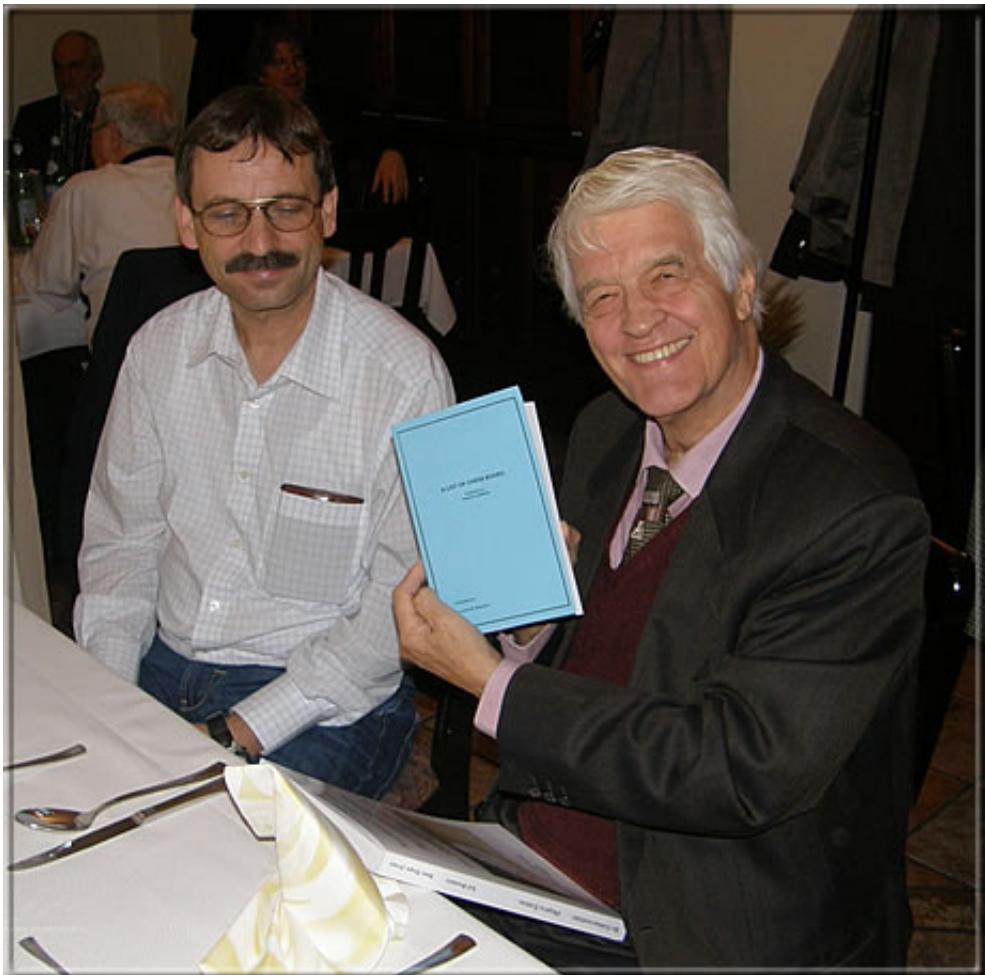
Lothar Schmid

with Anatoly Karpov, Viktor Korchnoi and Wolfgang Unzicker who celebrated his 80th birthday at the Mainz Chess Classic, 2005 ("Unzicker-Gala").



Lothar Schmid with Wolfgang

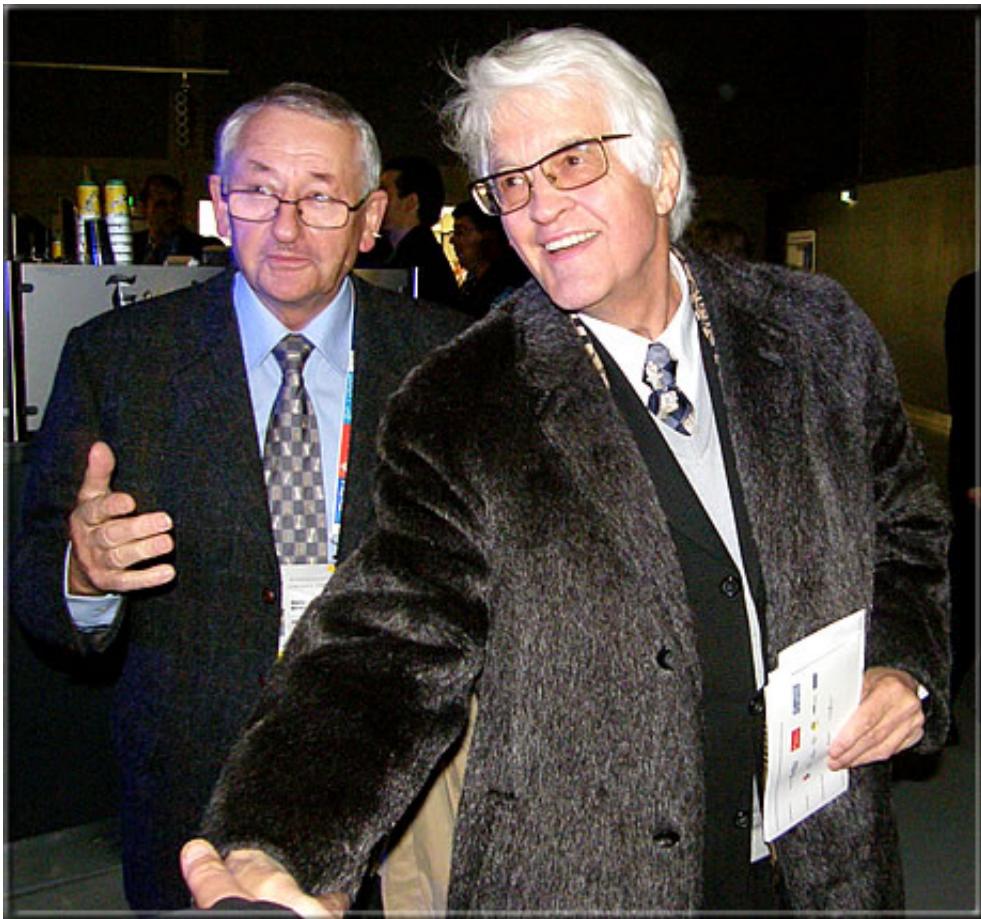
Angerstein CCI meeting in Braunschweig, October 2008



Hans-Jürgen Fresen and Lothar Schmid with Reitstein's *A List of Chess Books* CCI meeting in Braunschweig, October 2008



Lothar Schmid looking at our Ken Whyld poster (Introduction of the Lasker monograph at the Chess Olympiad Dresden, November 2008)



Lothar Schmid with
Manfred Mädler at the opening ceremony, just after L.S. had won his "entrance ticket fight" with
the security officers. Chess Olympiad Dresden, November 2008.



Lothar Schmid

shows his certificate, he has been appointed honorary member of the Emanuel Lasker Society.
Eckberg dinner, Dresden, November 2008.



Thomas

Thomsen and Lothar Schmid in Braunschweig, November 2011



Lothar Schmid

vs Michael Negele, Lasker rapid tournament, Berlin, January 2009

Numerous obituaries of Lothar Schmid are meanwhile online, I mention only the newspapers [Die Welt](#), [The Telegraph](#) and [The New York Times](#). (R.B.)

PS (13/06/2013): Our member Tim Harding has published an obituary in his column "The Kibitzer" at ChessCafe.com, please see: [Lothar Schmid, 1928-2013](#) (meanwhile only available for a fee).

Dear members and readers,

if you wish to contribute short words of condolence or anything else not generally known about Lothar Schmid, please let me know and e-mail to binnewirtz@arcor.de. I will post it at this place.

Ralf Binnewirtz, webmaster

Comments:

Paul Dunn (Macquarie, Australia), 31/05/2013:

Very sad to hear the news that Lothar Schmid has died. He visited Australia in 1971 and played in the Karlis Lidums tournament in Adelaide.

I was able to find all of his games except one and they are on www.ozbase.com.au.

Alessandro Sanvito (Milano, Italy), 28/06/2013:

I am sad; I heard that Lothar Schmid recently passed away after a long illness. I have met him many times and in different countries. He, together with many other chess scholars of the same generation, made many important contributions to chess, but now we are old. Grandmaster, famous arbiter in the Iceland match 1972, but chess books were his greatest love.

At first Chicco, than Zichichi and Ken, Pagni, Paoli, and so on ... I feel sad! But such is life!

PS (17/07/2013): **Alessandro Sanvito** has sent us his own obituary (in Italian) to publish on our site:

[Il Grande Maestro Lothar Schmid non è più.](#)