

Saluting Dr. Wolfgang Burhenne 1924-2017

Pericles said in his speech for the fallen of the Peloponnese War: a man's tombstone is not the place where he is put to rest, but rather it is the memory in which he continues to live within our minds. Wolfgang Burhenne's memory will be upheld by all the many important organizations who were privileged to count him amongst their leaders - an icon, a cornerstone, a symbolic personality, a paragon.

Wolfgang, my friend, allow me to address you as a fellow hunter and friend!

Dr. Wolfgang Burhenne, Chairman of IUCN Commission on Environmental Policy, Law and Administration - that impressive designation daunted me at the time when I first met you in the 1980s. I was equally impressed that you, as a globally known environmentalist openly acknowledged and unashamedly affirmed your life-long hunting passion, since already then numerous opponents of sustainable use in general and hunting in particular, argued their case in the world's conservation NGOs. Yet you announced your hunting passion again and again!

I recall one of our first conversations; grabbing my suit lapels you opened it with one of your signature introductions: "Horch mal her" (now, listen to me!) you said "the international conservation movement needs funding. And there is a huge untapped resource for genuine conservation: the passionate global hunting community. As a true hunter, I know this, as a hunter I promote this.... do you agree?" I did, and I was fascinated.

You saw the hunter-conservationists of the CIC as the ideal body to support your views and endeavors for global conservation of landscapes, habitats and all the creatures large and small. The CIC, according to your vision, could and should play a significant instrument in the orchestra of global conservation! You believed in the CIC as the umbrella organization to promote wildlife conservation through legal hunting! Hence big applause greeted you when you decided to join the CIC!

It did not take long that you became a Legal Advisor of the CIC - together with two other famous wildlife law experts, Dr. Rudolf Görtler of Austria and Maître Jean-Loudevic Hartmann of Switzerland.

Another one of your signature openers, especially when addressing me, at that time the president of the CIC, was: "Dieter, so geht das nicht!" (Dieter, this is not the way it is done). During our almost daily phone calls, at a time when the CIC started to become a global player, this standard phrase helped preventing the new CIC President and Executive Committee from stepping into legal pitfalls and administrative traps! "Dieter so geht das nicht!" and then you came forward with proposals of how to make things work.

Wolfgang, you assisted the CIC in many ways - from obtaining a quasi-diplomatic status in Hungary, where the CIC Headquarters moved in 1999; to crafting the CIC statutes in 2001 as a modern management tool to replace a structure, which you called antediluvian; supporting the move of the CIC

by Dieter Schramm, President of Honor, CIC International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation

legal seat from Paris to Vienna - as you always put it - away from the French law of a bowling club to the level of international state law. As a consequence, the 2004 Austrian Government Decree recognized the CIC as working in the public interest.

“Horch mal her”, you said as you eyed me sharply over your horn-rimmed glasses: “I am not your political advisor, I advise the CIC and it’s my duty to challenge you: Is what you intend to do in the interest of the CIC? Will it create personal rivalries? Are you sure that your arguments will convince the CIC leaders and members?”

My good friend Wolfgang, in your delightful home you introduced us to your charming wife Françoise, your partner in conservation. I valued your generous hospitality and the many fascinating and constructive CIC discussions with both of you. Françoise supported your strong belief that the CIC has the obligation to promote sustainable use as one cornerstone of conservation: at international level, within the UN System, at the conferences of parties of multilateral agreements and environmental conventions, and of course at IUCN.

You were the staunch supporter and the sounding board for Kai Wollscheid, the internationally recognized former CIC Director General, when he represented the CIC at UN entities, the European Commission, national governments and many international non-governmental organizations. You strongly supported Kai’s initiative to establish a close collaboration on inter alia the improvement of wildlife policy and law, particularly in Central Asia with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation.

You tirelessly supported the CIC Executive Committee in its work, yet you did not spare us criticism where warranted. You fought together with us to convince some of our friends that did not yet believe in the relevance of CIC’s political role.

You supported and diligently advised Kai in the development of the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and helped refining the document language. In 2004 the AAPGs were adopted by the Convention on Biodiversity. The joint development of the Council of Europe’s Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity, and its adoption within the Bern Convention in 2007, was another great achievement of this team consisting of a legal fox with an analytical mind, a dynamic CIC Director General and experts from IUCN and FACE.

Alas, Wolfgang Burhenne, without you the CIC would have never had an impact in IUCN. We would never have succeeded to establishing CIC as a globally recognized body of expertise in the field of sustainable use through ethical hunting. Remember, my friend, when you took my sleeve at the 2004 IUCN World Conservation Congress in Bangkok and whispered in my ear: “follow my advice and we shall get recreational hunting established as an accepted conservation tool!” I did, and we succeeded.

Your carefully structured advice helped the CIC establishing the CIC Markhor Award for Outstanding Conservation Performance at the Convention on Biological Diversity and you organized the first award ceremony together with the CBD Secretariat and the German Federal Ministry for Agriculture and Consumer Protection during CBD COP-9 in 2008.

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But, my dear friend and fellow-hunter Wolfgang, you could also be very adamant in locking horns, albeit with a twinkle in the eyes ... remember what happened at the IUCN Conference 2000 in Amman? You were a prominent promoter of the Earth Charter – an important document about how conservation of the World’s natural resources should be handled. When I vigorously opposed this document, because it had clauses adverse to sustainable hunting such as “you may not cause any pain when killing an animal”, you took me by the shoulders and proclaimed with your best authoritative and stern legal voice: “Horch mal her, Dieter ... this document is endorsed by former General Secretary Gorbachev and Queen Noor of Jordan...” And wherever I showed up in Amman you pointed at me: “Look at him, this is the guy, who is against our Earth Charter”!

We discussed this issue then and again later – and you, Wolfgang, were a good sport. It did not influence our friendship and our fights for common causes. To the contrary, you called me the “CIC President who lays the foundation for the future of this organization”. When I protested, saying too much honey gave me a stomach ache, you, dear friend smiled: “Horch mal her, Dieter, don’t worry, you get enough trashing as it stands ...!”

Together we climbed the Austrian Alps to hunt chamois, when I was invited by Emil and Tina Underberg, the co-initiators of the Fund for Environmental Studies in the Alpine Region (FUST). You insisted to accompany me, then well in the 9th decade of your life. When I was worried that you could handle the steep mountains you answered “Dieter, horch mal her, there is no problem, I have engineered two special retractable mountain sticks!

Back to the CIC statutes. When they required modernization you stepped in again as Honorary Legal Advisor of the CIC, now past ninety years of age. Instead of enjoying your newly built home in the Achensee Mountains and your beloved chamois hunting, your acute sense of duty prevailed. You again joined the team, and wore us all down in the discussions; chewing on the wording in all three official languages of the CIC: French, English and German. This sense of duty, and your finely tuned command of the three languages deserves our utmost respect!

Another of your CIC legacies, dear Wolfgang, was your insistence to align ourselves with the many great conservation organizations in North America. In our last telephone call towards the end of 2016 you complimented our American CIC Vice President Dr. Kaush Arha for his success in building a strong CIC representation in the USA.

“Wolfgang, horch mal her: ... we are proud and determined to upholding your legacy of a life-long hunter-conservationist! Smile, my dear friend Wolfgang! You are and will be always with us and we are and will be always with you!”

Rest in Peace!