

A Memorial for Walter Baade
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Translation from the German by Hilmar Duerbeck, Brussels Free University.
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In February 2001, I sent an e-mail to the amateur astronomers in Bad Salzuflen inquiring where the grave of the great astronomer Walter Baade could be found. This was the reason for Gerda-Ilka Borgelt, at that time the vice chairman of the amateur astronomers organization, to focus her interest on Walter Baade.

I became acquainted with Mrs. Borgelt and some other amateur astronomers from Bad Salzuflen during a talk which I gave in Detmold in March 2001.

A few days later, I received an e-mail from her asking me to present this talk also in Bad Salzuflen, and asking to learn more about Walter Baade, in order to write a brochure to inform the people of Salzuflen about this important person and astronomer, who had found his resting place in their city. I agreed to assist her in her project as much as I could.

Already in 1998, shortly before the end of the official end of the grave's existence [in Germany, this is generally limited to 25 years, depending on the city and graveyard], German and American astronomers (Professors Donald Osterbrock and Robert Kraft, both Lick Observatory, California, Prof. Theodor Schmidt-Kaler, University of Bochum, and Prof. Werner Pfau, University of Jena) had appealed to the authorities to convert it into a permanent grave of honor. The city administration of Bad Salzuflen responded immediately.

At the suggestion of Mrs. Borgelt, the amateur astronomers started a fundraising campaign for the establishment of a memorial stone with a bronze inscription, since the grave until then was decorated only with a gray boulder carrying the simple word BAADE. I also offered my contacts to astronomers who were known to me.

Mrs. Borgelt also established contact with Professor Donald Osterbrock, former director of the Lick Observatory in California, through Jochen Schramm, author of the book *Sterne ueber Hamburg*.

It was a great pleasure for Dr. Osterbrock to know that his friend and mentor Walter Baade should be honored with a memorial stone. He encouraged other American astronomers (George H. Herbig, Hawaii and Gerald and Katherine Kron, Arizona), to support the project with significant donations. The Baade memorial project, however, gained momentum only in the second half of 2002.

In spring 2003 the financial situation permitted us to sign the contract for the manufacture of a memorial stone. The sculptor, Helmut Schoen, had been consulted already in the previous year. Interestingly, he was born in Geesthacht, near Hamburg-Bergedorf, and knew the Hamburg-Bergedorf Observatory, where Baade worked and achieved notable discoveries in the 1920s with the (at that time) largest European telescope.

It soon became clear that this memorial could be inaugurated before the summer holidays, and invitations had to be written and sent.

The cemetery chapel near the grave seemed to be an appropriate place for the celebration. On request, the cemetery office offered it for this purpose free of charge. Only the funeral decorations had to be removed and decorations had to be chosen. Mrs. Borgelt knew from Donald Osterbrock that Walter Baade was a modest and buoyant person, thus the chapel was decorated with sunflowers and other summer flowers.

Two large portraits of Baade and a poster of Hamburg Observatory with an image and description of the large 1-m reflector were attached to the speaker's desk and the rear wall of the chapel.

Who should deliver the speech? Prof. Wolfgang Priester from the Institute of Extraterrestrial Physics of Bonn University and Prof. Volker Weidemann, an astrophysicist from Kiel University, agreed to share in the talk. Both had known Baade personally. Wolfgang Priester, like Baade, had been educated at the Friedrichs-Gymnasium in Herford, although 30 years later, and Volker Weidemann had met Baade in Pasadena, California.

On July 12, 2003, everything was ready. Around 4 p.m., in bright sunshine, the chapel was populated with expectant people in a festive mood. The 100 seats were about 80% filled with guests. Among them were members of the Baade Family, Prof. Peter Hauschildt as a representative of the Hamburg-Bergedorf Observatory, Arno Langkavel from the working group for the History of Astronomy in the Astronomische Gesellschaft [German Astronomical Society], residents of Walter Baade's birthplace, Schroettinghausen near Preussisch-Oldendorf in Westphalia, the current residents of the house in which Baade was born, amateur astronomers from Bad Salzuflen and surroundings, and citizens from Salzuflen and Herford. Representatives of the Friedrichs-Gymnasium were teacher Werner Bulk, former director and member of the Association of Former Students of the Friedrichs-Gymnasium (Friederizianer), as well as Bernhard Brauner, former school teacher and head of the school observatory.

Two students (Stefanie Fischer and Tobias Landwehr) of the music school in Bad Salzuflen and their teacher (Mihaela Mimor) added music to the festivity. They played music for transverse flute by Mozart. Manfred Hoersch, physics and mathematics teacher of the Rudolph-Brandes grammar school and head of the school observatory in Bad Salzuflen, greeted the attendees and expressed his thanks to Mrs. Borgelt for her commitment. Mayor Kleemann conveyed greetings of the city of Bad Salzuflen and

praised the merits of Walter Baade. He reported on the efforts for the conservation of the grave.

The grandnephew of Walter Baade, Kristian Baade from Minden, touchingly reported how the research by Mrs. Borgelt had brought him and his family closer to his great-uncle and his work: If Mrs. Borgelt had not inquired so persistently, our memories of my great-uncle would have remained packed into a drawer, and we would not have known so much about him!

Mrs. Borgelt reported how everything began, and what interesting and sometimes curious experiences she had encountered in her researches, during which I often accompanied her. Among other things, we visited Prof. Alfred Behr in Bovenden near Göttingen, who visited Walter Baade almost daily during his last months in the Göttingen University Hospital, and told us some details from that time: Baade did not like to write; one had to force him to sit down and pen something down. He always wanted to observe only. Her remarks and anecdotes were vividly applauded by the festival guests.

Wolfgang Priester described how open-heartedly and modestly Baade reacted on the bestowal of the degree of honorary doctor from Hamburg University. He painted a picture of his successful research work.

Volker Weidemann reported that he not only had the pleasure of working with the—as he said, bursting with buoyancy Baade—he also met with him privately. It was interesting to hear that in the institutes there [Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories], in the early '50s, more German than English was spoken. This had to do with the fact that very many Germans worked there and on the other hand to a regulation that all employees at the institute had to have a degree in German.

Very moved, Weidemann portrayed Baade's departure from America. For insurance reasons Walter Baade at 65 was no longer permitted to use the large telescope. This almost broke his heart. Prof. Weidemann deeply regretted that Baade died so soon after his return to Germany, and that he could not meet him again.

After the memorial service in the chapel, we went together to the grave, which was unveiled with the empathetic words of Mrs. Borgelt and with the assistance of the 12-year-old great-grandnephew Jonathan Baade, and presented to the public. The company turned to an inn on the heights of the Weser mountains, with a nice panorama of the Lippe country, for a subsequent banquet.

Later we learned from a member of the Baade family, who, during the memorial service in the chapel, had sometimes stayed outside with his toddler, of the surprise of an old lady about the activity in the chapel: "Who will be buried here? Why did they applaud? Such a happy funeral I have not yet experienced here."