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Mats Westin

I was born in 1962 in the university city of Lund in Sweden, which forced my mother to quit her position as a PhD student in plant physiology (she, however, took it up again 30 years later with the same supervisor!). I grew up with a younger sister and a younger brother, and we lived in many cities as my father changed jobs several times and the family therefore moved around. I took a junior college degree in biotechnology engineering in 1982, did my military service which was mandatory at the time and worked a year at Volvo Cars. In 1984 I started a Masters program in Chemical Engineering at Chalmers University in Gothenburg. In 1989 I was employed at the Forest Products and Chemical Engineering department with a half-time PhD position, which in 1991 became a full-time position. This first PhD project was on composites from modified wood fibers, and this involved a lot of research on durability properties. In 1992 I ran out of funding and was offered to take on another PhD project on novel wood preservation with Professor Thomas Nilsson as my second supervisor, which I gladly accepted. This project comprised new preservatives suggested by Thomas, new wood modification methods and combination of organic preservatives and wood modification. In 1994 I received further funding for my first PhD project within an EU project together with Joris Van Acker, Holger Militz and Antti Nurmi among others. Since my supervisor at Chalmers, Professor Rune Simonson, did not have the time to function as coordinator I took on the role to coordinate the project. In reality this meant that I ran both PhD projects in parallel. The first one led to my PhD degree whereas the latter one to several publications and patents but not to a formal dissertation.

Back in 1985, I met my wife to be, Marianne, who at the time was studying to be a nurse, and the year after we became engaged to be married. However, it took another 20 years, long after we had given up hope on becoming parents, before we, surprisingly, had our daughter Sara, who has been spoiled with love and attention since the day she was born.

After my dissertation in 1998, I continued as assistant professor at the same department at Chalmers for two years which included a lot of teaching (e.g. Cellulose and Paper Technology, Biopolymer Technology), supervising of Master and PhD students and own research within EU projects. In 2000, I started working at the Swedish Wood Technology Institute (Trätek) in Stockholm, although during the first year this was a split position between Trätek and Chalmers, since I still had a lot of commitments there. After that first year of travelling back and forth between Stockholm and Gothenburg, my wife also moved and we spent another three years in Stockholm, moving to a new address each year. At Trätek I worked not only with R&D on wood based composites, preservative treated wood and modified wood but also bio-based adhesives and coatings. The main focus was on durability aspects and especially field testing

of wood and wood-based products. I travelled around between different field test sites, mostly together with Thomas Nilsson. By 1999 we had started a large field test of resistance against marine borers for treated wood and in 2001 I took over responsibility for the field tests of wood products at the Kristineberg Marine Research Station (now named the Sven Lovén Center for Marine Research). The midsummer annual assessment of the test specimens at the marine station has become a highly appreciated tradition not only to me but also for a number of invited colleagues over the years. Just to mention a few who have participated more than once are: Thomas and Eva Nilsson, Andreas Rapp, Otto Rapp, Pia Larsson Brelid, Marie-Louise Edlund, Gry Alfredsen, Lone Gobakken, Andreas Treu, Christian Brischke, Linda Meyer, Simon Cragg, Annica Pilgård, Stig Lande, my mother, my wife Marianne, and a number of PhD and Master students.

At Trätek I was privileged to work with colleagues such as Ingvar Johansson, Finn Englund, Magnus Wålinder, Magdalena Sterley, Birgit Östman and Ralph Nussbaum and I very much enjoyed the productive and socially stimulating atmosphere at the institute. In 2004 Trätek became bankrupt and was taken over by SP, the Technical Research Institute of Sweden. The half of the Trätek staff who was not made redundant was integrated into the Wood technology section at SP to become SP Wood Technology. Two of the persons who then became my new colleagues were Marie-Louise Edlund and Jöran Jermer, although I already knew them well after several years of joint research projects.

After SP Wood Technology had been formed, Marianne and I moved to Borås where the head office of SP was located, where there was abundant laboratory and field space, and where the living cost was significantly lower than in Stockholm - for the same cost as our 1½-room apartment 45 min from the Stockholm office we could buy land and build a large villa 10 minutes from the Borås office! At SP I coordinated a large Nordic research project, working together with many researchers at VTT in Finland and the Norwegian Forest Research Institute (now part of NIBIO) and was the project leader for SP in many EU projects such as the Ecobinders project in which e.g. Joris Van Acker was the project leader for the University of Gent. The next task was to arrange with funding for and to start up a competence center called EcoBuild together with Magnus Wålinder and to function as Research Coordinator for the center that still exists. At EcoBuild's peak it had an annual turnover of €4,500,000. In 2012 I became the Research Manager and deputy Head of Department for SP Wood Technology and when the department was merged with two other departments in 2015 to form SP Sustainable Built Environment, I became the Research Manager for the new larger department.

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Over the last year SP has been merged with other institutes to form RISE Research Institute of Sweden with around 2500 employees and during this process there has been a substantial reorganization. Sadly, during this latest reorganization many close colleagues have been made redundant. Now, of the 90 persons that constituted SP Wood Technology's staff in 2014 only some 60 remain and they are now spread among three departments within two divisions of RISE.

My position is now as Business Development Manager at the Unit (department) of Bio-based Materials within the BioEconomy division of RISE, which gives me a rather free role within the organization and makes it possible for me to take on the role as Secretary-General of IRG.

Over the last 25 years, the research activities I have valued most have been the field work and the time I have spent at many test fields all over the world – stakes in ground, close to ground, above ground with or without coatings, fields with different types of decay pattern, termite fields, marine sites with strong borer activity, etc. This is something I definitely plan to continue with also in the future and probably, like Thomas Nilsson, I will continue doing so even after I have retired.

Other than field testing, my hobbies are travelling with my family, forest hiking, fixing up my house in the small community of Sandared and also my mother's cottage in the Gothenburg archipelago, reading historical novels and watching movies.

Finally, I am really looking forward to becoming the Secretary-General of IRG. I have already spent many enjoyable days with Jöran to figure out exactly what the task is about and during which he has trained me in executing the duties of this position. However, I am sure that I will need to come to Joran for continuing advice as I learn the ins and outs of this position!