

GRADUATE OF RIGA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, ATHLETICS STATISTICIAN ANDRIS STAĢIS

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Summary. The article summarizes the achievements of *Andris Staġis*, a graduate of the Faculty of Civil Engineering of Riga Polytechnic Institute (RPI; 1968), in the profession of an engineer, as well as reveals his contribution to the history and statistics of Latvian sports, achievements in athletics and their promotion. This is the first study on the activities and life of engineer, officer of the Order of the Three Stars, Latvian champion in athletics and the author of sports history books, and journalist *A. Staġis*. The aim of the research is to reveal the contribution of *A. Staġis* and the significance of his personality to Latvia using his and the authors' personal archives, documents of the State Archives of Latvia, and the collection of the National Library of Latvia.

Keywords: *Andris Staġis*, athletics statistics, Riga Polytechnic Institute.

Introduction

Andris Staġis, a graduate of RPI Faculty of Civil Engineering, is one of those personalities whose name is inextricably linked with RPI, Latvian sports life, and events in the 20th and 21st centuries. He is the pioneer of Latvian athletics statistics, thus making an invaluable contribution to Latvia; he set the foundations of the history of athletics, wrote several books on the history of Latvian athletics, created a system for researching sports achievements, as well as experienced great moments in sports and is a Latvian patriot. The authors of the article focus on those areas of life of RPI graduate *Andris Staġis* in which his contribution has been significant and will remain in the future.

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Childhood, School and Technical School Years

Andris Staģis was born on 3 August 1941 in *Ropaži* region. His mother *Vera Staģe* (1910–2000) was born in *Ropaži* Parish and was a housewife for many years. His father *Kārlis Staģis* (1914–1995) comes from *Sēja* Parish [1]; he graduated from Riga State Technical School (1935), studied at the Faculty of Mechanics of the University of Latvia (1941–1946) [2] and was a communications specialist all his life. *A. Staģis'* childhood memories are related to life near Riga – in *Ropaži* and *Sēja*. He spent the years of World War II (1941–1945) in his father's native home «*Purgaiļi*», *Sēja* Parish. He remembers the last year of the war– bombing, hiding in the basement, streams of refugees, etc. In 1946, the family moved to Riga, they walked from *Sēja* for two days to get to Riga. *A. Staģis'* sister *Maija Staģe* (b. 1943) was an infant at that time. The head of the family, *K. Staģis*, started working as a telephone specialist and until 1973 *A. Staģis* spent his childhood and youth in an apartment in the capital on *Vīlandes* Street. He spent the summers at his father's or mother's family home – in *Sēja* or in *Ropaži*. Together with the country-boys they had various competitions for who will write down the biggest number of passing cars, and had the «backyard» sports Olympiad. Sometimes, when others got tired, *A. Staģis* played sports alone, measuring and recording his results [3]. During the school years, there were other sports activities in Riga, like hockey puck driving in *Viesturdārzs* together with peers.



Figure 1. Parents of *Andris Staģis* – father *Kārlis Staģis* (1914–1995), mother *Vera Staģe* (1910–2000) on their wedding day (1940).



Figure 2. *Maija* (on the left) and *Andris Staģis* (circa 1948).

From 1948 to 1955, *A. Staģis* studied at the 49th Seven-year School in Riga and during this time he took up sports seriously, dropping out of piano lessons started in primary school, got strong and healthy; *A. Staģis* was prone to illness in his childhood and adolescence. He was also not tall. At home, *A. Staģis* and his sister had to perform various duties and help the family. The apartment had stove heating and he gladly chopped firewood.

For four years (1955–1959), *A. Staģis* studied at Riga Industrial Polytechnicum (RIP) where he obtained the qualification of a mechanical technician in the specialty of factory equipment repair and assembly. While studying at the technical school, he obtained valuable profession as well as many friends who, getting together after 50 years they remember all the good things they have experienced when studying, working and relaxing.

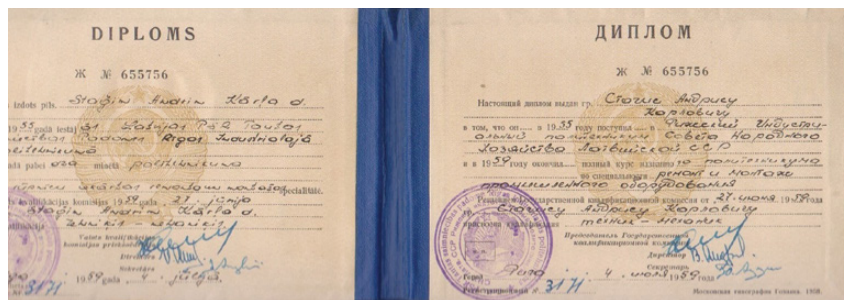


Figure 3.
Diploma of
Andris Staģis on
graduation from
RIP (1959).



Figure 4. RIP graduates in the specialty of factory equipment repair and assembly (1959). Row 1 from the left: *Leons Grahoļskis*, *Dainis Liepiņš*, *Edvīns Lapiņš*, *Andris Meikališs*, *Juris Ivanovs*, course teacher *Eduards Veinbergs*, unknown person, *Ivars Arkls*, *Andrejs Ābols*, and *Vilnis Lazda*. Row 2 from the left: *Voldemārs Levanas*, *Arvīds Ozolants*, *Juris Leja*, *Jānis Bērziņš*, *Gunārs Lasmanis*, *Zigurds Braslis*, *Rihards Indriksons*, *Almārs Bergs*, *Edmunds Belohvošķiks*, *Andris Staģis*, *Jānis Purmalis*, *Harijs Švāns*, and *Juris Priedītis*.

Riga Polytechnic Institute and the *Stāģi* Family

The life of *A. Stāģis* and other family members of the *Stāģi* family is closely related to RPI. *A. Stāģis* began his studies in the specialty of sanitary engineering in the Faculty of Civil Engineering of RPI after serving in the army in the autumn of 1963, and in five and a half years, he obtained the qualification of a civil engineer-plumber. In the first two and a half years, he studied in the evening department – attended lectures, participated in seminars and performed laboratory work in the evening, while during the day working as a full-time repair locksmith, combining it all with sports.

While studying and playing sports, as well as representing RPI in student competitions, the management and teaching staff of the institute was very understanding and allowed to pass many exams and tests at later dates – favourable for *A. Stāģis*. He raised prestige of RPI and participated in competitions as its representative. His RPI diploma dates back to 27 December 1968, but his graduation took place in early 1969.

Graduate of Riga
Polytechnic
Institute,
Athletics
Statistician
Andris Stāģis

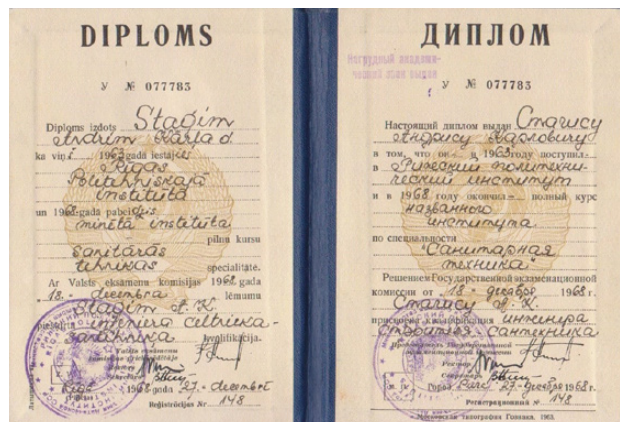


Figure 5. RPI Graduate Diploma of *Andris Stāģis* (1968).

Figure 6. Graduates and lecturers of RPI Faculty of Civil Engineering (1968). Row 1 from the left: 5th – Assistant Professor *Emilija Moskovkina*. Row 2: unknown person, *Anna Karakečba*, *Ingrīda Jespere*, unknown person, *Dace Dzintare*, unknown person. Row 3: *Dainis Žube*, unknown person, *Mihails Aronovs*, *Andris Stāģis*, *Vilnis Brigmanis*, *Andris Krievs*, and *Ādolfs Senkāns*.



As already indicated, relatives of *A. Staġis* are also related to RPI and its heir Riga Technical University (RTU). Sister *Maija Staġe* (m. *Šteina*) graduated from RPI Faculty of Automation and Computer Technology (1966) and RTU Faculty of Transport and Mechanical Engineering (2009) in masters programme. Also her husband *Uldis Šteins*, brother-in-law of *A. Staġis*, who was a long-term Chief Engineer of Riga Film Studio (1968–1978), Deputy Director (1978–1990), Director (1990–1998) and Head of RPI / RTU Folk Dance Ensemble «*Vektors*» is a graduate of RPI (1959). *U. Šteins* was the manager of «*Vektors*» for 55 years, until 2016, and *Maija Šteina* danced in it – during her study years and later in the middle generation and senior groups. Both children of *Maija* and *Uldis* also studied at RPI. *Margita Staġe* (m. *Sondore*), the eldest daughter of *A. Staġis*, graduated from RTU Faculty of Instrument Engineering and Automation (1993) and worked at RTU for many years – she was an assistant to Rector *Ivars Knēts* (1938–2019) and the senior quality systems specialist in the Academic Policy and Quality Department [5].

Athlete's Life and Achievements in Sports

Already during the school years, *A. Staġis* actively played sports in the spacious yard of the house and in summer in the countryside. In his free time, he played basketball and volleyball with his peers and did sports in the athletics stadium. Thanks to physical activity he found his lifelong occupation.

In 1953, being a student, *A. Staġis* turned to sports. The interest in athletics was also stimulated after seeing the film about the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki together with the farm boys. After that, they organized their Olympiad and prepared the necessary equipment themselves – they made a disc. Later, *A. Staġis* made his own hammer out of lead [6]. While studying at the technical school, in 1957, he began to train regularly in athletics with coach *Eduards Jakobsons* (1914–1993).



Figure 7. Athletes with coach *Eduards Jakobsons* (in the middle). From the left: *Guntis Osvalds*, *Eduards Jakobsons*, and *Andris Staġis* (circa 1960).



Figure 8. *Andris Staģis* throws a disc in the Baltic Youth Games in Riga (1960).

He achieved good results – in 1960 *A. Staģis* set a Latvian record in throwing a 6 kg hammer for young people (53.11 m) in the competition of members of the youth teams of the Baltic republics and the Soviet Socialist Republic of Belarus (19 years old and younger). In this competition, he also won the 1.5 kg discus throw (48.12 m) [7]. After enlisting in the Soviet Army, the athlete continued training in Kaliningrad, Russia, where he served until demobilization in 1963. Good physical fitness helped in military service and also in sports competitions. *A. Staģis* had also grown considerably – his height was 1.89 meters and he was strong and healthy. In 1962, at the competition in Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Moscow region, he became the junior champion of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in triple jump (13.98 m).



Figure 9. Serving in the army in Kaliningrad – *A. Staģis* trains in hammer throwing (1962).

Since 1960, *A. Staģis* has been an athlete of the Latvian national team. During his studies (1964–1968), he was one of the best athletes in RPI in several athletics disciplines – 100, 200 and 400 meters run, 110 meters and 200 meters hurdles, high jump, card jump, long jump, disc and

spear throwing, shot put, decathlon, as well as hammer throwing and triple jump [8, 9, 10, 11, 12]. In the last two disciplines, he was twice the champion of Latvian student spartakiads (1965, 1966), representing RPI. *A. Staģis*' result in triple jump (15.62 m) in 1968 was an RPI record for a long time. The athlete was four times the Latvian vice-champion in hammer throwing, long jump and triple jump (1964–1969). Until 1970, he was in the Latvian athletics team. In the 1980s–1990s he played hockey. He was a goalkeeper of the amateur hockey team of the Riga Wagon Building Factory.



Figure 10. Start of triathlon in Latvian students' spartakiad (mid-1960s). From the left: first – *Ivars Knēts*, third – *Andris Staģis*.



Figure 11. *A. Staģis* starts in the 100 m race in the Baltic Games in Panevezys, Lithuania (1966).

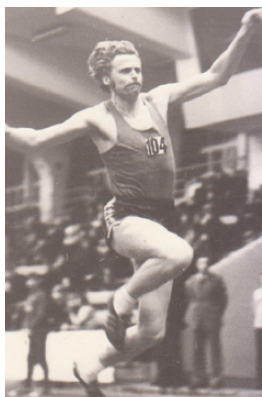


Figure 12. *Andris Staģis* in long jump in Riga Sports Arena (1969).



Figure 13. Riga Wagon Building Factory amateur hockey team. Second from the left: *Andris Staģis* (1980s).

After the dynamic activities of the athlete, the connection with sports remains. Since 1984, *A. Staģis* has also been an informant referee in athletics competitions. He has been in this position 560 (!) times, until April 2020 [13]. When he was invited to be the competition commentator, *A. Staģis* carefully prepared for that so that the comments about the athletes' achievements and places in the world or in Latvia were accurate.



Figure 14. Athlete competition informant referee at his workplace (early 21st century).



Figure 15. *Andris Staģis* after the starts and wins in the veteran athletics competition at the «Daugava» Stadium in Riga (around 2010).

Sport has occupied an important place in the life of *A. Staģis* for the seventh decade. In recent decades, activities in the athletics team of veterans have played an important role in his life. In such competitions, in addition to good results, it is satisfying to prove oneself and to enjoy being together with like-minded people. Numerous interesting competitions and games have been experienced together with youth friends and competitors not only in Latvia. *A. Staģis* has also proved himself internationally – in 2008 he won a bronze medal in hammer throw (38.52 m) at the European Masters Games in Malmö, Sweden. The games were also special for the athlete because his wife *Gunta Staģe* also returned home with a bronze medal won in discus throwing (20.98 m) [14].

Research of Sports History, Sports Journalism and Recognition

A. Staģis has achieved success in various sports disciplines. This has definitely helped him in compiling sports history and athletics statistics.

Since 1963, *A. Staģis* has been engaged in athletics statistics, he was encouraged to do so by a member of decathlon, a graduate of RPI (1961) and later the rector of RTU, academician *Ivars Knēts* (1938–2019). In the beginning it was collecting and summarizing sports results, recording and systematizing the facts of sports history of RPI, later – on a national scale. It became a hobby for a lifetime and *A. Staģis* is rightly called a Latvian athletics statistician and historian. In 1971, *A. Staģis* became a member of the International Association of Track and Field Statisticians (ATFS), which has about 300 members from all over the world [6].

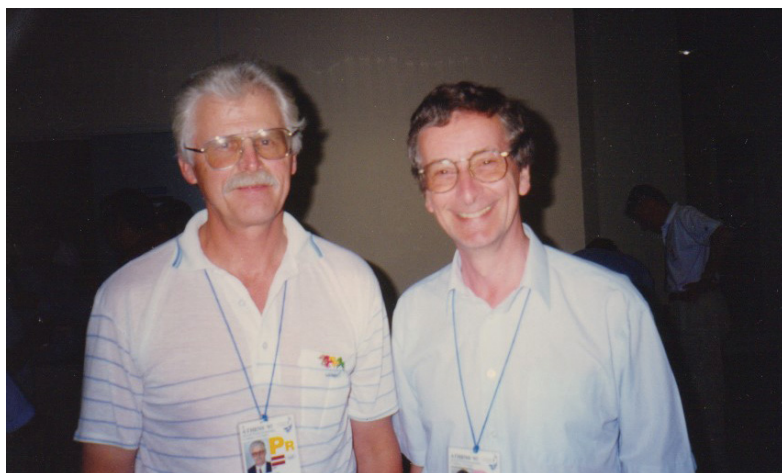


Figure 16. Together with the world's leading athletics statistician Peter Mathews from Great Britain (early 21st century).

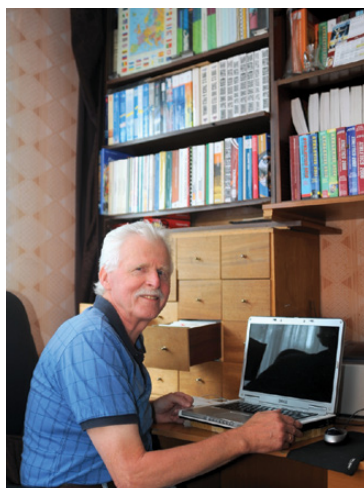


Figure 17. *A. Staģis* at home at the filing cabinet and computer –the workplace of a statistician (beginning of the 21st century).

The work of statisticians has changed dramatically over the years. *A. Staģis* once contacted with the help of letters and provided information to foreign statisticians about the results in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. He himself had folders with newspaper and magazine clippings [15], notebooks with notes and data from the press, as well as a «cabinet of numbers», which contained cards with data on almost every important newspaper and magazine clippings athletics event in Latvia and in the world [6]. Nowadays, computers make the job of compiling the results much easier, but the file or «athletics' *Daina* cabinet», as journalists call it, is still performing its function.



Figure 18. Journalists at the World Championships in Athens in the workplace of journalists (1997). From the left: *Andris Staģis*, *Egils Jurisons*.



Figure 19.
Excursion
during the World
Championships in
Athens – Acropolis
of Athens (1997).

As a journalist, *A. Staģis* has participated in nine world athletics championships (1995–2009) and six European championships (1994–2015), reflecting the impressions gained in person in the Latvian sports press. He is having excellent professional relationship and is exchanging information with many Latvian professional journalists writing about athletics – *Egils Jurisons, Jānis Matulis, Armands Puče, Anatolijs Kreipāns*, and others.

The highlight of his journalist's life is the 1995 World Athletics Championships in Gothenburg, Sweden, where he saw two phenomenal world triathlon records set: Jonathan Edwards, UK, jumped 18.29 m [16] and Inesa Kravetsa (*Инеса Миколаївна Кравець*, Ukraine) – 15.50 m [17]. Both records are still unbeaten even after 25 years. *A. Staģis* was a special correspondent of newspapers at the competitions [18], because his professionalism could always be relied on. In his turn, *A. Staģis* not only performed the duties of a sports journalist professionally, he was also an eyewitness to sports results.

As a result of several decades of diligent work, *A. Staģis* has published many articles and several fact-rich books: «*Latvijas vieglatlētika 100 gados*» («Latvian Athletics in 100 Years») (1996), «*Latvijas vieglatlēti olimpiskajos 100 gados*» («Latvian Athletics in 100 Olympic Years») (1998), «*Latvijas vieglatlētika 100 gadus*» («Latvian Athletics in 100 Years») (2000), «*Latvijas sports*» («Latvian Sports»; *Latvijas mazā enciklopēdija/ Latvian Small Encyclopaedia*, 2008), «*Šķēpa karalis Jānis*» («King of Javelin Jānis») (2009), «*Kārtslēkšana pasaulē un Latvijā*» («Card Jumping in the World and in Latvia») (2011), «*Latvijas barjerskrējēji: no Alslēbena līdz Olijaram*» («Latvian Hurdles: from Alslēbens to Olijars») (2013), «*Latvijas vieglatlētikas vēsture: 1897–1944*» («History of Latvian Athletics: 1897– 1944») (2016), «*Latvijas vieglatlētikas vēsture: 1944–1991*» («History of Latvian Athletics: 1944–1991») (2017), «*Latvijas vieglatlētikas vēsture: 1992–2018*» («History of Latvian Athletics:



Figure 22. Presentation of *Andris Staģis'* book «*Latvijas vieglatlētikas vēsture: 1897–1944*» in bookstore «*Jumava*» in Riga, 73 *Dzirnavu* Street (2016). From the left: *Andris Staģis*, editor *Zenta Valtere*.

The unique work of *A. Staģis* in preserving, systematizing, documenting and promoting the history of sports has been highly appreciated in Latvia for several decades. During the celebration of the centenary of Latvian athletics in 1998 he was awarded a Certificate of Recognition from the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, and in 2018 – with the Order of the Three Stars of the Fifth Class [19], as well as the annual «*Sporta balvu par mūža ieguldījumu*» («*Sports Award for Lifetime Contribution*») of the Latvian Athletics Union. In 2016, he received the European Athletics Association Award for Novelty.



Figure 23. President *Raimonds Vējonis* (first from the left) presents to *A. Staģis* the Order of the Three Stars of the Fifth Class (17.11.2018).



Figure 24. *Andris Staģis* (first from the left) receives the Latvian Athletics Union's annual «*Sporta balva par mūža ieguldījumu*» («*Sports Award for Lifetime Achievement*») (2018).

A. Staģis still has a lot of different ideas, a huge field of work in systematizing and preserving the facts of sports history and his great love of his life – athletics – will give him and us all beautiful moments that make us proud of Latvian athletes and their achievements. *Andris Staģis* practically has no moments of leisure, because he always has to be in his «position».

Professional Work

A. Staģis is best known for his hobbies, but he has also done non-sports jobs for many years. From 1959 to 1960, after graduating from the technical school, he was a locksmith at the bicycle factory «*Sarkanā Zvaigzne*» («Red Star»). This was followed by service in the Soviet Army, from which he returned in 1963. He used the professional knowledge of a repair locksmith in his new workplace – factory «*Santehnikis*» («Plumber») (1963–1965), combining studies with work. The locksmith's job was a good practice in the workplace related to the specialization of the future engineer. From 1969 to 1973, after studies at RPI, A. Staģis was an engineer at the State Electrical Engineering Factory (VEF). From 1974 to 1985, he was an engineer and Head of the Ventilation Bureau of the Riga Radio Factory [15], then a locksmith in the factory's Radio Box Shop, for a short time he was the factory's deputy chief energy engineer (1992–1993).



Figure 25.
Tinsmith's work
on the roof of the
«Press House»
(late 20th century).

A. Staģis' last job was at the «*Preses nams*» («Press House») printing house, where he worked as a locksmith for the repair of ventilation and air conditioning equipment from 1993 to 2004, when he retired [13].

Strong Support – Family

Success in sports for *A. Staġis* is inextricably linked to happiness in private life. While playing sports and training, he met a nice training partner – *Gunta Muceniece*. While still a student, *A. Staġis* married (in 1966) and has been with his wife for more than 50 years. His wife *G. Staġe* has also achieved good results in sports not only in her youth, and the range of the received medals is quite large. She is still a sportswoman and ranks among the best not only in Latvian sports veterans' competitions in shot put, disc, hammer and spear throwing [20] but is also in sports veterans' competitions held abroad. Loving family is very supportive and understanding in *A. Staġis'* intensive pace of daily work, which has not decreased after the retirement. Festive times are, of course, spent together. His wife *Gunta Staġe*, daughters *Margita Sondore* and *Laila Staġe*, and granddaughter *Dārta Sondore* ensure that there is a loving and bright atmosphere in the family after intensive work, which is a source of energy for big and small deeds.



Figure 26. At the golden wedding celebrations in culture palace «*Ziemeļblāzma*» with his wife *Gunta Staġe* and granddaughter *Dārta Sondore* (2016).



Figure 27.
Andris Staģis
with daughter
Margita at the
European Junior
Championship in
Riga (1999).

A. Staģis has also managed to attract his eldest daughter *Margita* to one of his activities – the duties of an informant. For example, in 1999, she was a competition informant at the European Junior Championship in Riga.

Andris Staģis also finds time for other hobbies – berry picking, philately, country and hit music recordings, and collecting books about the Olympic Games. For some time he also started collecting Olympic badges [3].

He still fixes everything at home. Work life and study time at RPI prepared him for various jobs. *A. Staģis'* field of work is infinitely wide, but he has been able to organize his every working day from morning to evening by minutes. And he has enough time for sports and other hobbies.

Conclusions

Riga Technical University, the heir of RPI's traditions and activities, has many outstanding graduates who are known for their high sports achievements. One of them is RPI graduate, officer of the Order of the Three Stars, one of the pioneers of Latvian sports statistics, author of sports history books, athlete, journalist, and engineer *A. Staģis*, of whom the university is really proud. In his youth, he raised the prestige of RPI by winning many medals at the Latvian Championships, confirming that his *alma mater* is a university that has rich sports traditions and outstanding athletes. *A. Staģis* was a Latvian national team athlete (1960–1970) had best results in long jump (7.19 m), triple jump

(15.62 m), disc throwing (46.62 m), hammer throwing (55.07 m), and decathlon (6241 points) [6]. We can be proud of *A. Staģis'* performance in veteran sports as well, especially the bronze medal won in the hammer throwing at the European Athletics Veterans Games in 2008.

The books written by *A. Staģis* and compiled statistics are important in the history of sports. Decades have been dedicated to this work and it has always been a selfless work for the present and the future, which is appreciated and respected in Latvia and in the world. The name of *A. Staģis* is known to everyone who is interested in sports. Being a versatile personality, *A. Staģis* is also satisfied with the work done, because he has achieved two main goals – he has been a member of the Latvian national team and has obtained higher education [6].

RPI gave *A. Staģis* wings and they took him really high – albeit in a field not related to the work of an engineer. But the awards of the Republic of Latvia are a testament to the fact that this work is of a lasting value that will remain for future generations and promote the image of Latvia far in the world.

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SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures 1–13, 15–27. A. Staģa personīgais arhīvs.

Figure 14. Jura Bērziņa personīgais arhīvs.



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Rīgas Politehniskā institūta absolvents, vieglatlētikas statistiķis Andris Staģis

Rakstā apkopots Rīgas Politehniskā institūta (RPI) Celtniecības fakultātes absolventa (1968) Andra Staģa veikums inženiera profesijā, kā arī atklāts viņa devums Latvijas sporta vēsturē un statistikā, sasniegumi vieglatlētikā un to popularizēšana. Tas ir pirmais pētījums par inženiera, Triju Zvaigžņu ordeņa virsnieka, Latvijas čempiona vieglatlētikā un sporta vēstures grāmatu autora, žurnālista A. Staģa darbību un dzīvi. Pētījuma mērķis ir atklāt A. Staģa devumu un viņa personības nozīmi Latvijai, izmantojot viņa un autoru personīgos arhīvus, Latvijas Valsts arhīva dokumentus, Latvijas Nacionālās bibliotēkas krājumu.

Atslēgas vārdi: Andris Staģis, vieglatlētikas statistika, Rīgas Politehniskais institūts