

LIFE OF A GRADUATE OF RIGA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE RODRIGO SLAVIŅŠ, AN ENGINEER AND ORIENTEER, AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ORIENTEERING SPORT

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Summary. The article reflects on the achievements of *Rodrigo Slaviņš*, a graduate of the Faculty of Chemistry (1963) of Riga Polytechnic Institute (RPI), an engineer, the Officer of the Order of the Three Stars, three-time champion of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Master of Sports in orienteering, in the development of orienteering sports traditions, his work at the Latvian Olympic Committee (LOC), as well as his activities as the Head of the Latvian Orienteering Federation (LOF). Special attention is paid to his merit in popularizing orienteering sports and his achievements in competitions of various scales. Developing this article, the authors interviewed *R. Slaviņš*. They used his personal archive, the documents of the Latvian National Archives of Latvian State Historical Archive and RTU Archive, the collection of the Latvian National Library, scientific literature, and publications in the press.

Keywords: Riga Polytechnic Institute, *Rodrigo Slaviņš*, orienteering sports.

Introduction

This study on one of the graduates of Riga Technical University, orienteer, and promoter of the orienteering sports in Latvia, *Rodrigo Slaviņš*, was conducted in anticipation of the 160th anniversary of Riga Technical University (RTU) in October 2022 and the 60th anniversary of LOF in February 2023. Orienteering gained popularity in the Baltics after

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World War II, and it ultimately became the main centre of development of orienteering in the USSR. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, students and teaching staff of RPI (from 1990 – RTU) also started to deal with orienteering. In the mid-1960s, about 5000 athletes, mostly students and graduates of RPI and the State University of Latvia, were engaged in orienteering sports in Latvia [1].

Not all enthusiasts of that time continued orienteering after graduating from the university, but for some, this discipline became a lifelong passion. Along with *R. Slaviņš*, among the long-time orienteers, there are RPI graduates *Līvija Blanka* (b. *Nātra*), *Anna Slaviņa* (b. *Znota*), *Arno Līcis*, *Gunārs Dukšte*, and many other old masters. Orienteering has been one of the most popular and widespread sports in Latvia since the second half of the 20th century, and its popularity has been promoted by RPI graduates, including *R. Slaviņš* and his family.

The authors of the study had the chance to get acquainted with the engineer, sportsman *R. Slaviņš* from a variety of perspectives while characterizing his professionalism, versatility, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Personality Development in Childhood and Youth

Rodrigo Slaviņš, in the birth certificate – *Rodrigo Kārlis Slaviņš*, was born in *Ventspils* on 2 April 1939 in the family of *Marta Līna Slaviņa* (b. *Veikmane*; 1915–2006) and *Kārlis Slaviņš* (1907–1994). After the wedding, the parents moved to *Ventspils* in the summer of 1935, where they lived at 31 *Pils* (later *J. Fabriciusa*) Street. The family lived in an apartment with a separate kitchen and a large yard, where they could meet the neighbours' children. *Rodrigo's* mother worked as a secretary-typist in various municipal institutions in *Ventspils* for many years; his father had learned the trade of a master shoemaker [2] and later was a stoker and cook on various watercrafts fairing in the water area of the *Ventspils* Port. The parents of *Rodrigo's* mother – farmers *Emīlija Veikmane* (1888–1965) and *Jānis Veikmanis* (1888–1954) managed «*Smildziņas*» House of *Lonaste* (*Kārļmuiža*), *Ances* Parish, *Ventspils* County. All that is known about his father's parents is that his father's father *Fricis* was a spinner [3]. *Rodrigo* spent all summers with his grandparents in «*Smildziņas*» House. It was possible to get there by a narrow-gauge train *Ventspils–Pope–Dundaga–Talsi*, getting off at *Lonaste* Station. *Rodrigo's* Grandfather bought this property in 1924, many years later, the property was inherited by *R. Slaviņš*.



Figure 1. Birth verification letter of *Rodrigo Kārlis Slaviņš* (5 Aug 1941).



Figure 2. The wedding of *Marta Līna and Kārlis Slaviņš* at «Smildziņas» House in *Lonaste (Kār]muiža)*, *Ances Parish* (10 Jun 1935).



Figure 3. *R. Slaviņš* in 1944. The coat and the hat are made from the coat cloth woven by his grandmother *Emilija Veikmanis* (1944).

After the war, *R. Slaviņš* began studying at the 1st *Ventspils* Seven-Year School at *Saules* Street. Due to post-war hardships, in the junior grades, *Rodrigo* carried a school bag made of imitation leather by his father. There were no problems for *Rodrigo* in his studies – the boy only had to listen to what the teachers said in class, and he immediately remembered it.

During his elementary school years, his health was rather weak. *R. Slaviņš*, a resident of *Ventspils*, started playing sports regularly from the 5th grade – running, skiing, cycling, and hiking. Later, he entered the Basketball Department of the *Ventspils* Children's Sports School, graduating from it in 1957.



Figure 4. On the left: *R. Slaviņš*, a 6th-grade pupil of *J. Fabriciuss 1st Ventspils Seven-Year School*, receives a diploma of summer sports games (1953).



Figure 5. *R. Slaviņš*, a pupil of *J. Fabriciuss 1st Ventspils Secondary School* (c. 1956/1957).



Figure 6. *R. Slaviņš*, an 8th-grade pupil of *J. Fabriciuss 1st Ventspils Secondary School* in athletics competition (1955).



Figure 7. Pupils of *J. Fabriciuss 1st Ventspils Secondary School* in Riga at the Freedom Monument during the Spartakiad of the pupils of the LPSR. First on the left: *R. Slaviņš*. (c. 1957/1958).

Later, in the second half of the 1950s, he studied in the 1st *Ventspils* Secondary School named after *J. Fabriciuss* in a class with 13 boys and 10 girls. Some of the boys were older than *Rodrigo*. The first paid job played an important role in *R. Slaviņš's* life – while studying at the secondary school, he worked every day as a laboratory technician in the school's chemistry lab (later – also in the physics lab) with a salary of 30 roubles (1955–1958). It promoted independence. *Rodrigo* also earned money by taking pictures at various events. His spare time interests were various – photography (from the 5th grade and even now – true, as *R. Slaviņš* himself says, at the amateur level). His photographs, documenting the sports activities of RPI students, were published in the newspaper «*Jaunais Inženieris*» (Young Engineer) in 1961 [4]. At some moment in time, he was fond of fishing and crabbing. In the 5th grade, he joined the geography club. Later, while he was at the secondary school, the supervising teacher of his class *Alfrēds Ķepals* (1926–2010) was also a geography teacher [5]. *Juris Jansons*, an RPI graduate, engineer, passionate local researcher, and traveller was his schoolmate since the 8th grade and later his fellow student. They have maintained their friendship throughout their lives.



Figure 8. *R. Slaviņš*, a pupil of *J. Fabriciuss* 1st *Ventspils* Secondary School – laboratory assistant in the chemistry lab (1956).



Figure 9. Graduation of the *J. Fabriciuss* 1st *Ventspils* Secondary School. Eight in the last row from the right: *R. Slaviņš* (1958).

Parents raised *Rodrigo* so that he could be independent and hardworking, responsible, able to take care of his family. They succeeded in their efforts.

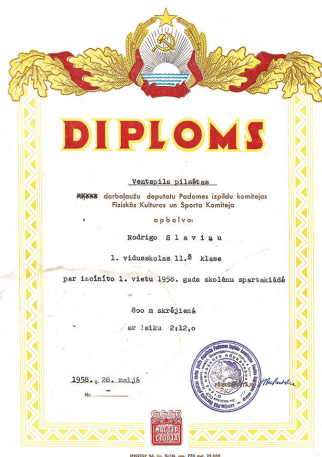


Figure 10. Diploma of *R. Slaviņš*, an 11th-grade pupil of *J. Fabriciuss* 1st Ventspils Secondary School for winning 1st place in the 800 m race in the sports games (1958).

Academic and Sports Life of *R. Slaviņš* at Riga Polytechnic Institute

After graduating from the secondary school in 1958, *R. Slaviņš* entered the re-established RPI to study chemistry. The competition at the Faculty of Chemistry was big that year – 12 people per study seat. *R. Slaviņš* came to RPI with the previous work experience at the secondary school chemistry lab and passed his entrance exams at RPI very successfully [5]. He entered the Day Department of the Faculty of Chemistry of RPI [6]. In the first years, the students went to collect the harvest for the collective farms in the autumn, and *R. Slaviņš* also got to know his group members first by doing physical work.



Figure 11. RPI Faculty of Chemistry students after working on a collective farm (1958).



Figure 12. Students of the 1st and 2nd groups of the RPI Faculty of Chemistry on the collective farm. From the left: second *R. Slaviņš* (c. 1959).



Figure 13. Students of the 1st group of the RPI Faculty of Chemistry in *Valmiera* before working on the collective farm (around 1958/1959).



Figure 14. 1st and 2nd students of the RPI Faculty of Chemistry on the collective farm. *R. Slaviņš* with forks (c. 1960).

Life of a Graduate of Riga Polytechnic Institute
Rodrigo Slaviņš, an Engineer and Orienteer, and his Contribution to the Orienteering Sport

The Faculty of Chemistry of RPI was located at 4 *Kronvalda* Boulevard. The two internships of the chem students had to undergo were interesting. In September 1962, under the leadership of the Dean (1962–1965) *Vladimirs Karlivāns* (1928–2005), four students from the Faculty of Chemistry and four from the Faculty of Mechanics went to the German Democratic Republic (GDR), where they spent a month and a half at various factories. The second – the pre-diploma practice – was organised in the winter of 1963. Student *R. Slaviņš* was sent to the 2nd Assembly Plant in Moscow, Russia, where the most exciting impression for him was living in the same dormitory room with two Chinese students for one month. During his studies, *R. Slaviņš* was a diligent and successful student [6], except for the first session – he did not pass the exam in physics at the first attempt. He even received an enhanced scholarship for one semester in the last study year – 1962/1963. *R. Slaviņš* introduced a self-help fund for the chemists who lived in dormitory, then his fellow chemist students established an association «*Hula-Hup*», it even had its flag! He did not attend the mandatory physical education classes, because he participated in the training of various sports sections of RPI [5]. Sometimes he played basketball with the faculty laboratory assistant *Guna Karlsona*, a player on the TTT team. *R. Slaviņš* was elected the person responsible for sports activities at the faculty. On 26 March 1961, many students participated in the friendly competition of RPI and SUL in orienteering in *Langstiņi*.



Figure 15. RPI student team in *Babīte* before starting the closed route distance. From the left: *R. Slaviņš*, *Dzintars Gērics*, *Vanda Nagliņa*, *Juris Jansons* (1958).



Figure 16. An RPI Faculty of Chemistry student *R. Slaviņš* at the lecture (c. 1960).

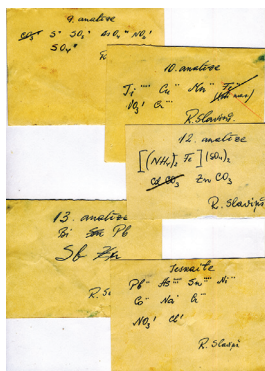


Figure 17. Notes in analytical chemistry made by *R. Slaviņš*, a student of the RPI Faculty of Chemistry, called «collected articles» by the course mates (c. 1960).



Figure 18. An RPI Faculty of Chemistry student *R. Slaviņš* at the «Daugava» Stadium in the 800 m running distance (1962).



Figure 19. A student of the RPI Faculty of Chemistry *R. Slaviņš* works at the dormitory construction site at 2a *Laimdotas* Street, Riga (c. 1961).

During his studies, *R. Slaviņš* lived in a student dormitory. He also participated in the construction of the dormitory building at 2a *Laimdotas* Street in Riga. The building was put into operation at the end of 1961 [7].

When starting his studies at RPI, *R. Slaviņš* first joined the skiing section. Its sports base was located in the bicycle track in *Leņina* (at present – *Brīvības*) Street near the VEF Factory. From there, RPI students ran along the sandy streets of the *Teika* Neighbourhood to the *Biķernieki*



Figure 20. The team of the RPI Faculty of Chemistry before the start of the tourism competition at the obstacle course. From the left: *Visvaldis Švinka, Aivars Teikmanis, Juris Vilnītis, R. Slaviņš* (1962).



Figure 21. An RPI Faculty of Chemistry student *R. Slaviņš* in his dormitory room at 2a *Laimdotas* Street (c. 1961/1962).

Forest. The coach *Laimonis Kvēps* (1928–1975) rode along on a bicycle. When the snow set, skiing lessons began (led by RPI coaches *Jānis Lodīis* and *Gunārs Krastiņš* (1936–2003)). Then followed October 1958 with a start on the closed route of the Riga Tourists and Alpinists' Club, which became the starting point of the path *R. Slaviņš* made in orienteering. He and his associates founded the RPI orienteering group, which was led by a student of the RPI Faculty of Civil Engineering *Juris Jansons*. Students participated in various competitions showing remarkable results. For exam participated in the IX (1960) and X (1961) gathering of the USSR tourists in the Sverdlovsk Region of Russia, participating in the competition which was held during the gathering. The participants of the RPI Tourism and Orienteering Sports Section not only went on hikes, but also participated in different types of orienteering competitions (at first – winter orienteering and classical orienteering) and were among the best athletes in tourism and orienteering in Latvia. This success was forged also by *R. Slaviņš* [8]. At the beginning of 1962, the RPI team won 1st place in the overall team ranking in the winter orienteering competition (skiing competition with a map and compass) at the XI tourist gathering of the USSR. With more than 600 athletes competing, the RTU men's team won 1st place, the women's team won 8th place [9]. The then RPI Director *Kristaps Neilands* (1899–1960) and the Head (1959–1978) of the RPI Department of Physical Education and Sports *Vera Molčanova* (1918–2005) was very supportive of athletic students.

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Figure 22. The RPI student team at the gathering in the Urals before the start of the orientation team competition at the border of Europe and Asia. From the left: *Andrejs Vasilis, Juris Jansons, Viktors Zālītis, R. Slaviņš* (1960).



Figure 23. The RPI student team before the start of the orientation team competition at the border of Europe and Asia in the Urals. In the middle: *R. Slaviņš* (1961).



Figure 24. Diploma granted to *R. Slaviņš* for winning 1st place in a closed route competition (1961).

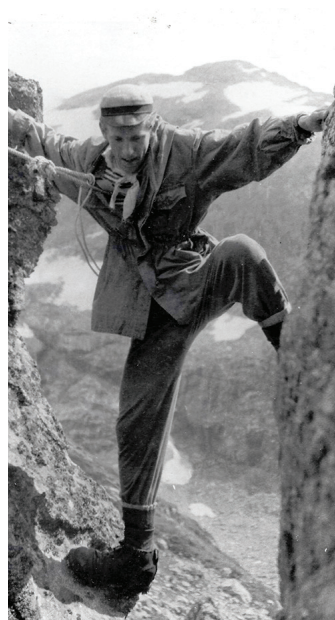


Figure 25. An RPI student *R. Slaviņš* in the mountains (1960).

R. Slaviņš intensively participated in the joint trainings and, as far as possible, took part in all competitions with orienteering as one of the disciplines. The RPI athletes and orienteers managed to create an amiable atmosphere. On 11 November 1962, they participated in the competition dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of RPI [10]. RPI

orienteers were highly recognized in Latvia for many years, taking award-winning places as members of the Latvian National Team. For example, *R. Slaviņš's* teammate, a graduate (1964) of the RPI Faculty of Mechanics, *Arno Līcis*, won a silver medal in the 1st All-Union Competition in Uzhhorod in 1963 during his study year at RPI [11]. *R. Slaviņš* course mates *Helmutš Guļevskis* (1937–2019), *Anna Znota*, *Imants Pelns* (1939–1965), *Māris Bļodons*, *Aivars Teikmanis*, *Jānis Klētnieks* (1940–2014), *Felikss Apinis* and others were also actively engaged in orienteering at that time.



Figure 26. Students of the RPI Faculty of Chemistry. Third from the left in the first row: *R. Slaviņš* (c. 1959).

Students from other faculties of RPI competed along with the students of the Faculty of Chemistry *R. Slaviņš* and *Anna Znota* (m. *Slaviņa*). *Rūdolfs Ābols* (Faculty of Electroenergetics), *Lilija Barisa* (m. *Metuma*; Faculty of Mechanics and Machine Engineering), *Māra Bieziņa* m. *Ābola*), *Līvija Nātra* (m. *Blanka*) and *Māris Blanks* (Faculty of Mechanics), as well as *Ināra Ģipsle* and *Gunārs Dukšte* (Faculty of Civil Engineering) as the members of the team of the sports association «*Daugava*» and the Latvian national teams for many years were the winners in team rankings at the USSR scale. Mutual friendship, genuine joy for each other's success and support in every little matter was the valid key to success. During their studies, students-athletes became a family where trust and responsiveness, keeping one's word and honour were and still are the central values [5].



Figure 27. RPI chemists in the Caucasus Mestia. From the left: *Fēlikss Grunbergs, Aldis Zeibots, Uldis Mīkstais, Visvaldis Švinka, Romualds Lavrinovičs, Jānis Meškovs, Juris Vilnītis* (1962).



Figure 28. Singers of the men's choir of RPI «*Gaudeamus*» on tour. From the left: *R. Slaviņš, Aldis Zeibots, Valdis Tolmanis* (c. 1960).

R. Slaviņš was also a member of the men's choir of RPI «*Gaudeamus*», but later his interest for sports prevailed.



Figure 29. Title page of *R. Slaviņš's* diploma project (1963).

R. Slaviņš developed the diploma project «Base Workshop for Master Assembly of Polyethylene Pipes. The Capacity of 500 t of Pipes per Year» (Assistant Professor *Česlavs Soboļevskis* (1907–?) was the supervisor of this project). Having successfully defended the diploma project, *R. Slaviņš* graduated from the Faculty of Chemistry of RPI on 28 June 1963, obtaining the qualification of an engineering technologist in the specialty «Plastics Technology» [6]. Fellow students keep meeting each other and are still friends.

Figure 30.
Students and
academic staff of
the RPI Faculty
of Chemistry at
the graduation
ceremony
(1963).



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Figure 31.
Diploma of
R. Slaviņš, a
graduate of the
RPI Faculty of
Chemistry (28
Jun 1963).



Figure 32.
Graduates of the
group of 1963 of
the RPI Faculty
of Chemistry at a
reunion meeting
(c. 2015).



At that time, work placement of new specialists in the USSR was mandatory for the graduates of the day department. During the placement to the new workplaces, the best students were the first to choose. *R. Slaviņš* was an excellent student in the last semester, he had an enhanced scholarship, so he opted to stay to work in Riga.

Work and Family

After obtaining an engineer's diploma, *R. Slaviņš* was assigned to work as a foreman of a galvanic workshop in a state company called «p/k 211». It was located in Riga and later became a «*Komutators*» Factory. He soon took the position of a department's engineer-technologist. In 1966, engineer *R. Slaviņš* changed his job and by 1990, he had built a career from an instructor to the Head of the Self-Employed Tourism Department at the Latvian Republican Council of Tourism and Excursions. In 1990, his workplace became the External Economic Relations Department of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, where the engineer started working as the chief specialist of the Tourism Department [12]. Two years later, in 1992, *R. Slaviņš* began working as a chief specialist in the Tourism Department of the Ministry of Transport, then – in the Latvian Tourism Council of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. Two years later, in 1994, *R. Slaviņš* joined the insurance joint-stock company «*Balta*», where he performed the duties of a personnel manager, then – the Head of the Personnel Department. It was his last job, and he worked there until his retirement in 2009 [5].



Figure 33. *R. Slaviņš* with his son *Ģirts* on Mont Blanc (1999).



Figure 34. *R. Slaviņš* with his wife *Anna* in Cēsis (2015).

On 22 May 1965, after long-time friendship during their studies at RPI and many hikes they made together, *R. Slaviņš* started a family with *Anna Znota*, a graduate (1964) of the Faculty of Chemistry, who also played sports. She was among the five best RPI athletes in 1961 in athletics (100 m, 200 m, and 400 m running) [13]. The family has a son, *Ģirts*, who currently is a successful entrepreneur. Grandchildren of the couple – *Krišs*, *Zīle*, and *Māra* – are also engaged in orienteering sports.

Figure 35. *R. Slaviņš* with his family on the day of their Golden Wedding in *Vidriži* Parish. From the left: *R. Slaviņš*, his daughter-in-law *Laura Slaviņa*, holding *Māra Slaviņa*, standing *Zīle Slaviņa*, *Anna Slaviņa* (2015).



Work in the Latvian Orienteering Federation and Sports Activities

R. Slaviņš retained his passion for orienteering sports that he developed in his study years. Sports ranks in the Latvian orienteering started to be awarded in 1962. Since 1966, athletes could win the title of Master of Sports of the USSR. The summer of 1966 was significant for orienteering sports, when orienteering competitions were held in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, where for the first time in the history of this sport, 10 athletes won the title of USSR Master of Sports. Six of them were Latvian athletes, including three RPI graduates – *Lilija Barisa*, *Līvija Nātra*, and *Jānis Klētnieks* [14]. *R. Slaviņš* became the USSR Master of Sports in orienteering in 1967.

R. Slaviņš has won many and various medals both in the championships of the USSR and in international competitions from 1965 to 1975. He participated in international competitions as a member of the USSR National Team. For various reasons, the composition of the varsity team was not always approved. For example, in 1973, the composition of the USSR National Team had long been confirmed, but suddenly its executive secretary Yevgeniy Ivanov (*Евгений Иванов*; 1937–2020) was summoned by some official who categorically forbade him

to start with this strong team, because five of the six members were ... Latvians. Some of the team members had to be replaced in order for the team to be able to compete [15; pp. 129–130]. In the times of the USSR, Latvians also managed to compete and win large-scale competitions. Thus, in the fourth All-Union Competition in the Bryansk Region of Russia in 1969, the men's team won first place, and the women's team won third place. The representative of Latvia *R. Slaviņš* became the Champion of the USSR for the first time [16].

The Latvian Orienteering Federation was founded on 7 February 1963 [17]. *R. Slaviņš* became its third president in 1965. He served as the LOF President for the longest time (1965–1982; 1986–1999), and none of the nine presidents has led the federation for so long. *R. Slaviņš* took part in orienteering competitions in Latvia, the USSR and abroad. In this sport, as *R. Slaviņš* admitted in an interview to journalist and writer *Juris Brežģis* (1935–2002) in 1967, one must have the ability to read the map accurately, and navigate the surroundings both day and night in all seasons and in any weather conditions. An athlete must be endowed with strength, endurance and dexterity [18].



Figure 36. The National Team of the USSR at the orienteering competition in the GDR. From the left in the 1st row: first *Lilija Barisa*, third *Līvija Blanka*; in the 2nd row: second *R. Slaviņš* (1969).

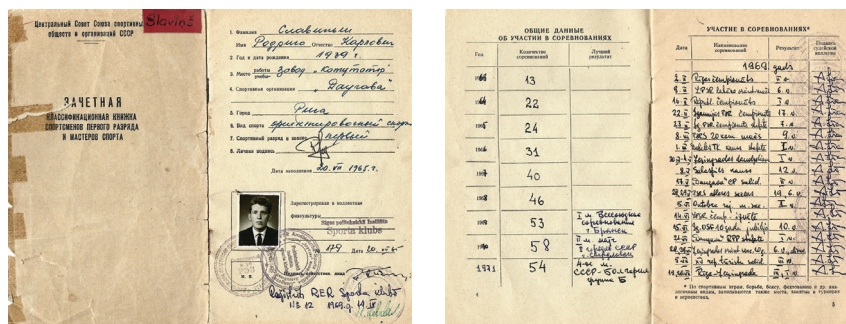


Figure 37. Record book of an orienteer *R. Slaviņš* (1969).

President of LOF *R. Slaviņš* asked an engineer and orienteer, the Head of the Orientation Section of the Riga City Council of the Voluntary Trade Union Sports Society «*Daugava*» *A. Līcis* to create a competition form for the working people and athletes to be used on weekday evenings, which would be suitable for different age and skill groups. Analysing the experience of orienteering sports in the world, including the massive engagement in orienteering in Sweden, *A. Līcis* proposed and organized the orienteering competition «*Magnēts-69*» [19], which was scheduled for ten Wednesday evenings from 4 pm to 7 pm. Participants could choose a distance appropriate to their skill and age. The number of participants in the competitions increased and they became famous and massive. In the following years, about 20 cities, regions organised similar competitions. On one of the Wednesdays in 1980 in Riga, the number of participants in «*Magnēts*» reached as many as 2400. In 1987, 2484 participants were registered in one round [20]. Representatives of the International Orienteering Federation came to Latvia to familiarize themselves with the achievements, and they expressed their appreciation that nowhere in the world such a large number of people dealt with orienteering on weekday evenings as in the Latvian competitions. The world's leading athletes from Scandinavia had also visited Latvia several times and were delighted with the achievements of the Latvian orienteers. In 2019, «*Magnēts*» celebrated its 50th anniversary.



PSRS SPORTA MEISTARA KANDIDĀTS
KALNU TŪRISMĀ
RODRIGO SLAVIŅŠ

Figure 38. *R. Slaviņš* (c. 1970).

R. Slaviņš's life motto is «Achieve the goal with your actions!» [21] accompanies him throughout his life and is manifested in the way he deals with the organization and management of sports. In

addition, he has coached orienteers and advised beginners in the sport of orienteering. One of them, UL Professor *Sarmīte Tūbele* (b. *Lūse*) remembers, «I met *Rodrigo Slaviņš* (everyone called him *Rodža*) for the first time in the fall of 1973, when in *Olaine* (at one of the chemical factories), besides getting to know life after the university, I started doing some orienteering. *Rodža's* wife *Anna Slaviņa* (called *Aņķe*) took it upon herself to train us, and then both running and reading the map became everyday. I liked everything – in the forest, in the gym, even on skis in winter. Already in December 1973, there was the first competition that sparked excitement (the first earned diploma for third place). Then, also after other competitions, the situations, the choice of forest paths, the technique of marking points and everything else were analysed. Sometimes we listened to *Rodža's* suggestions; and one of his most memorable sayings was «Orienteering is a sport in which you will never stop marvelling at your stupidity until you grow old!». It seemed strange, especially after the first successes in the forest paths, but then there were times when it was impossible to finish the distance. And then you remember the wise words about orienteering. Then everything gets into the right place and the next times are full of success again, the joy and vigour have not been lost, because even great men do not always succeed in everything. However, with such an admirer's view – because *Rodža* mostly succeeded in everything, at least it seemed so to me» [22].

The name of *R. Slaviņš* was well known in the USSR, he was not only an athlete and a three-time Champion of the USSR. *R. Slaviņš's* still has the skills of an organizer. He has also worked in the office of the Central Orientation Section of the USSR [15; p. 261], was a judge of the All-Union category [15; p. 262].

R. Slaviņš still participates in the work of the Historical Commission of LOF. He has also worked in the Latvian Olympic Committee (LOC) – he has been a member of it for many years since its restoration in 1988 [23], participated in the work of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Looking back on *R. Slaviņš's* activity in the orienteering sport over the period of over 50 years, it must be said that he criss-crossed the territory of the former USSR, spent time in Europe, Asia, and America, participated in many hikes and also represented the USSR Team in mountain tourism, promoted orienteering sport in Latvia to world-class success.

In 2008, *R. Slaviņš* won the bronze medal in the Seniors Competition in Portugal. In 2009, at the World Veterans Orienteering Championship in the M 70 age group in Sydney, Australia he became World Champion and won the gold medal. In 2015, he won the bronze medal at the World Veterans Orienteering Championship in Gothenburg [24], he participated in the rogaining match of Grand Canaria in Spain.



Figure 39. The team that won the place in the USSR Championship in the mountain tourism trekking group in the Pamir Mountains. From the left: third *R. Slaviņš* (1981).

Figures 40–41. *R. Slaviņš's* mandate for participation in the session of the General Assembly of LOC (2004) and membership card at the LOC renewal conference (1988).



Figure 42. *R. Slaviņš's* certificate for participation in the work of the IOC Assembly in honour of its centenary (1994).



Figure 43. *R. Slaviņš* at the World Veterans Orienteering Championship in Australia with the gold medal in the 70-year-old age group (2009).



Figure 44. *R. Slaviņš* – the 3rd place winner in Gothenburg at the World Veterans Orienteering Championship (2015).

Orienteering competitions, veteran sports matches, photography, driving a car on country roads, spending time with his family, and meeting with friends and fellow students are part of *R. Slaviņš* everyday life, which brings satisfaction and joy to himself and others.



Figure 45. *R. Slaviņš* at the rogaining match of Grand Canaria (c. 2015).

Conclusions

In 2006, *R. Slaviņš* was awarded the Letter of Recognition of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia for his commitment and success in working for the Latvian state. In 2011, for his contribution to the management and development of Latvian orienteering sports, he was awarded with the Order of Three Stars of the V Class [25]. Riga Technical University (RTU), the heir of RPI's traditions and work, can be genuinely proud of its graduates who have contributed to the development of Latvia and popularized the orienteering sport. An RPI graduate, orienteer, orienteering sports leader and organizer contributed to promoting the popularity of this sport in Latvia. In the second half of the 20th century, orienteering became a popular mass sport and in the 21st century it still attracts many people. This is also evidenced by the fact that in 2005 orienteering was recognised as the most popular sports discipline in Latvia. In 2006, it was still the most popular sport [26], and many RPI / RTU graduates deserve credit for making it so widely recognised, including *R. Slaviņš*. Mass orientation competition «*Magnēts*» is also still organised. Perhaps, it is attractive because, as a journalist *Vija Paikena* (b. *Romanovska*, m. *Vāvere*; 1951–2020) wrote in 1983, it is more intimate than all other sports disciplines, because «you come to the forest, put on your training clothes and run» [26].

Honestly and conscientiously fulfilling his duties, *R. Slaviņš* has fascinated not only his descendants with orienteering. This sport is still massive, exciting, and available to anyone who wants it.



Figure 46. From the left: *R. Slaviņš* with the President of Latvia (2007–2011) *Valdis Zatlers* in the Riga Palace, receiving the Order of the Three Stars (2011).

Orienteering is recognised as one of the most popular sports in Latvia, so it might be useful to know not only its history, supplementing the research of the History Commission of LOF, but also the stories of

other RPI students and graduates who contributed to its development and popularized it. In the private archives of the old masters of the orienteering sports, there are many photographs in which sporty students are seen studying, working and taking their moments of rest, and it is an essential historical testimony about the life and achievements in sports of the engineers educated and trained by RPI / RTU.

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Life of a Graduate of Riga Polytechnic Institute
Rodrigo Slaviņš, an Engineer and Orienteer, and his Contribution to the Orienteering Sport

SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures 1–35, 37–46. R. Slaviņa privātais arhīvs.

Figure 36. A. Līča privātais arhīvs.



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Ērika Lanka, Arno Līcis

Rīgas Politehniskā institūta absolventa, inženiera un orientierista Rodrigo Slaviņa dzīvesdarbība un ieguldījums orientēšanas sportā

Rakstā atspoguļots Rīgas Politehniskā institūta (RPI) Ķīmijas fakultātes absolventa (1963), inženiera, Triju Zvaigžņu ordeņa virsnieka, trīskārtēja Padomju Sociālistisko Republiku Savienības (PSRS) čempiona, sporta meistara orientēšanās sportā Rodrigo Slaviņa veikums orientēšanās sporta tradīciju veidošanā, Latvijas Olimpiskajā komitejā (LOK), kā arī raksturota viņa darbība Latvijas Orientēšanās federācijas (LOF) vadītāja amatā, izvērtēti viņa nopelni orientēšanās sporta popularizēšanā un sasniegumi dažāda mēroga sacensībās. Veidojot rakstu, autori intervējuši R. Slaviņu un izmantojuši viņa personīgo arhīvu, Latvijas Nacionālā arhīva Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīva un RTU arhīva dokumentus, Latvijas Nacionālās bibliotēkas krājumu, zinātnisko literatūru, publikācijās presē.

Atslēgas vārdi: Rīgas Politehniskais institūts, Rodrigo Slaviņš, orientēšanās sports.