

Gianfranco Renner - In memoriam

31 August 1944 - 17 April 2026

Gianfranco Renner was born in Trieste on 31 August 1944 and graduated from the Nautical Technical Institute of Trieste in 1963. He was awarded the title of Student Captain of the Long Course in the same year, and, in 1966, the title of Aspirant Captain of the Long Course. From 1963 to 1966, he worked at the Lloyd Triestino Shipping Company with the qualification of Long Course Captain Trainee with destinations in South Africa, eastern Africa, and India.



Long Course Trainee Gianfranco Renner.

Renner was hired in 1966 at the Osservatorio Geofisico Sperimentale (OGS, now the National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics – OGS) as an experimenter and began his career in the OGS Marine Laboratories. His first work experiences were related to studies in the Gulf of Trieste. Subsequently, his work was carried out almost exclusively on vessels owned or chartered by the OGS. Among the most demanding oceanographic and/or geophysical campaigns he carried out, worthy of mentioning are: physical oceanography studies in the Adriatic Sea, the Strait of Sicily, and the Aegean Sea; morphological studies along the Italian coast from the Gulf of Trieste to the Tyrrhenian Sea (Maratea, Basilicata) and the island of Elba; refraction seismic studies on the deep crust of the Gulf of Trieste, Calabria, and Sicily; reflection seismic studies of the crust of the southern Tyrrhenian Sea and the Svalbard Islands (Norway) in the Arctic Ocean;

gravimetric studies of the Strait of Sicily; geomorphological-oceanographic study of the Strait of Messina for the construction of the gas pipeline; oceanographic studies on platforms; and the installation and maintenance of oceanographic buoys for the study of high water in Venice.



During a geophysical survey with OGS colleagues: Renner is to the left.

Renner graduated in geology in 1982 at the University of Trieste defending a geological-geophysical thesis entitled "Geological-technical zoning of the municipality of Forni di Sotto". In the same year, he moved to the OGS Seismological Section to manage the Trieste station belonging to the World Wide Seismographic Station Network (WWSSN), whose instruments were located at the bottom of the huge cave named Grotta Gigante. During this period, and until 1988, he compiled the preliminary and final bulletins of the WWSSN Trieste station and wrote several papers on regional seismology and seismotectonics, topography, and geophysics.

Renner collaborated with colleagues at OGS, researchers from the Universities of Trieste, Udine, and Rome, the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology, the Seismic Service of the Ministry of Public Works, the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region, the Institute for the Study of the Dynamics of Large Masses in Venice, in Italy, and foreigner researchers from the Universities of Ljubljana (Slovenia), Karlsruhe (Germany), and the Federal Office for Earth and Space Sciences in Vienna (Austria). Research within the OGS was mainly seismological or seismotectonic in nature, while the external research focused on geodetic or seismotectonic aspects. It is worth mentioning, among his several researches, the revision of all the locations of the earthquakes in north-eastern Italy recorded by the OGS seismological network from 1977 to 1987. This catalogue was published in a special issue of the international journal *Bollettino di Geofisica Teorica ed Applicata* (presently *Bulletin of Geophysics and Oceanography*).



Seismologist Renner is reading seismograms of the WWSSN Trieste station.

In addition to the activities listed above, Renner contributed to several research projects funded by the Basilicata Region, the Superintendency for Environmental, Architectural, and Historical Heritage of Salerno and Avellino, the Italian National Agency for New Technologies – ENEA, and the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region. He also participated in a summer training course on natural risks organised by the European University and taught groups of university students and final-year high school students visiting the OGS.

His work within the trade unions is also worth remembering: first as a representative for the OGS personnel, and then, in the 2000s, as regional secretary for scientific research institutions.

The main characteristic aspect of Gianfranco was his ability to develop long elaborations, controls, and cross-checks with a superhuman attention and precision: everybody used to blindly trust that a work done by him was simply perfect. Moreover, his memory was famous: he was able to remember details of the work done many years before.

Gianfranco was a very gentle, generous, affable, and kind-hearted man, always willing to lend a hand to anybody in need; all colleagues and friends hold fond memories of the time spent together with him.

MAIN PAPERS

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