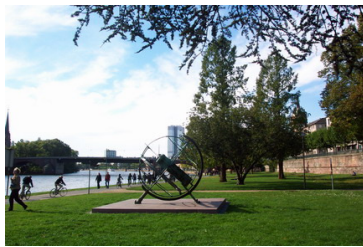


English language manuscript for “Carpe Diem” article by Martha A. Villegas

A new place
for the Equatorial sundial of Lothar M. Loske
from 1951 in Frankfurt am Main

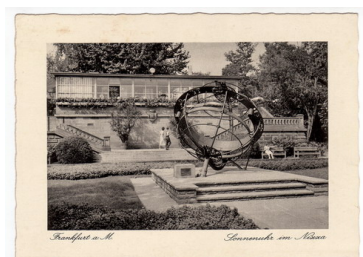
Nice (in German Nizza) is a beautiful French town at the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Nizza, however, is also called an area along the riverbank of the river Main in Frankfurt in Germany! It had been a splendid idea of Frankfurt garden authorities, certainly also of clever politicians in the post World War II era! As long as towns create such ideas and cultivate and improve such ideas, they will always have a chance and also people who live in such a town!



In this garden area along the river Main the Frankfurt town gardeners planted a big number of Mediterranean flowers which created a southern flair into the still heavily bombed and suffering big town. People went to this “Nizza”, relaxed between luxuriant flower beds during summertime and dreamt to be at the Mediterranean Sea!



Into this “Nizza” also a big equatorial sundial of 3, 4 meters diameter was installed. In a little magazine, called “Technischer Ansporn”, this sundial was then celebrated as “The biggest Sundial of the World!” What a crazy idea! World War II was just over and people tried hard to arrange themselves in the destroyed country. Certainly there were completely different priority assignments than to build a big sundial!

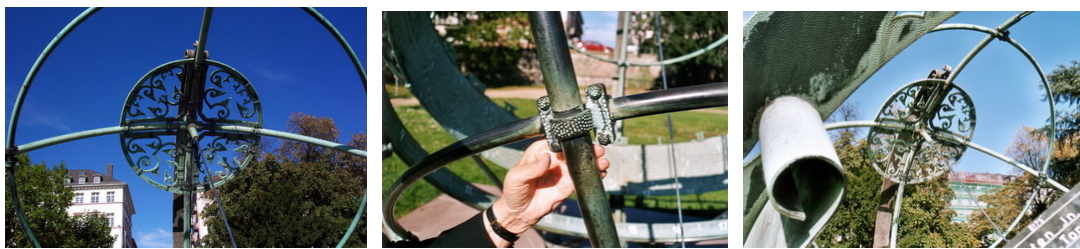


Dr. Habil. Lothar M. Loske, an about thirty years old engineer and clockmaker master, who was not even a citizen of Frankfurt, had persuaded the head of the supervisory board of the “Vereinigte Deutsche Metallwerke AG (VDM)” (United Metal Company) to build a sundial completely made of copper and to donate it to the city and citizens of Frankfurt! From today’s point of view this was a completely crazy idea, especially as this company was not at all

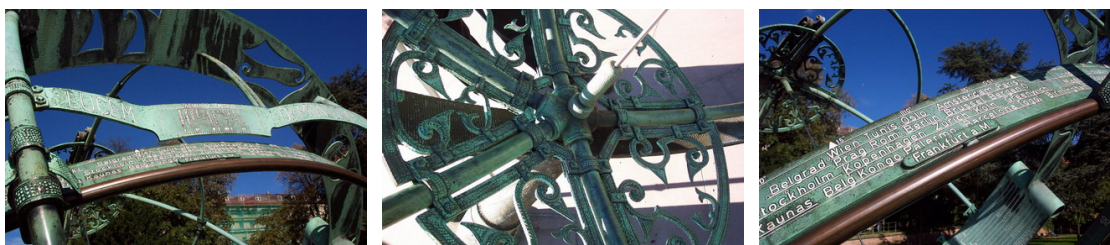
organized to accept such a complicated order. They usually produced half-ready goods and sold them to other companies who improved these prepared goods. But in this post war era there was also a very special climate of trying the impossible! There were people who saw challenges first and not the difficulties to solve a problem.



Let us think a bit about the situation: In 1949 sundials were no longer “fashionable”. If we think strictly, it was a rather useless tool! A luxury good! However Loske’s design included a very modern exceptional idea! This sundial ought to have a movable ring with which the passing by pedestrians were able to adjust the time for 200 locations around the globe. It was the time, when no one had money to travel. So all travels had to be done in day dreams! What a splendid idea to create such a fantastic tool and put it into a relaxation area!



This way of thinking is still nowadays lively in Frankfurt! We know that all big European communities suffer from lack of money. Despite of this in 2004 the town of Frankfurt spent much money to restore this 1000 kg heavy sundial which was partly damaged by Vandals or ordinary 50 years “use”. It was re-erect some 1,4 km away from the previous place. As in 1951 it was a clever investigation into future! If one takes the original costs of 21 000 DM as an image- and advertising budget, which is about 10 000 Euro nowadays, this money really was a splendid investigation! In a countless number of postcards, posters, brochures, articles this sundial was an excellent “ambassador” of the spirit of this town. Thousands of inhabitants and guests have passed this sundial since then.



It was not at all an ordinary sundial design; it was something very special which did not exist since then! It was as well a piece of art and a gnomonic masterpiece! This was a remarkable fact also of all the other sundials which Prof. Loske built in Europe and in Mexico later on. But even you have a splendid idea and a perfectly worked out design, as long as you don’t find a customer it always remains an idea. But Mr. Loske must have had a very special convincing nature which enabled him to inspire people! So he convinced the chairman of the

board of “Vereinigte Deutsche Metallwerke AG (VDM)” that his company could build this sundial and donate it to the City of Frankfurt!



First of all the sundial had to be built! And someone had to take responsibility in this big company and say: ‘We can build it!’ And this “someone” was a young lady, who worked as an engineer in this company – a woman in a pure men domain, which was then an absolute rarity! Her name was Hildegard and she was engaged with Kurt Langeloth. After she was asked by a manager whether the company could build this sundial she went home and talked with her fiancé and said to him: “I have no idea of how to build this giant sundial! I don’t have enough knowledge about astronomical questions. This sundial will have to work very exactly with an accuracy of seconds!” Kurt Langeloth, who was then still an engineer student, soothed her and said: “I have been very much interested in Astronomy, when I was at school! I will help you and together we will manage all difficulties!”



So the later Hildegard Langeloth agreed and told the managers of the company next morning: “Yes, we can build this sundial!”

In 2003 a son of Lothar M. Loske had visited Frankfurt and had no longer found his father’s sundial at its previous place. His brother Dr. Achim Loske had asked me through Martha A. Villegas whether I could find out what has happened with the sundial. Soon I was able to report to Mexico that the city of Frankfurt had decided to restore the sundial and will put it to a better place with more sunshine near the river Main. After the reopening of the sundial in August 2004 I got to know that also an 84 years old qualified engineer, Kurt Langeloth, had joined that ceremony. So I wrote a letter to him and asked him whether I might visit him in Frankfurt and ask some questions about the construction of the sundial in the 50s of the last century. He agreed and invited me to his home.

He showed interesting old documents to me, which he had carefully bound in a book and told me many interesting details about the time of the construction of this sundial.

Everybody in that company thought this would be a crazy idea. It took a pretty long time – almost two years – from the beginning till the unveiling of the sundial. Many hurdles had to be taken, starting with getting enough material and also the handling of the Tellamon prop, which had to be produced in steel and afterwards galvanized in copper in another town. About 6000 working hours were calculated in the end. The workers always first had to work for the

goods with which the company earned money and when there was some time left they took care of the sundial. Great craft skills were necessary, but also thousands of patiently done hammer blows. All the different many parts had to be adjusted carefully and had to fit exactly. It is amazing how elegant and light this one ton building looks like.



L.M. Loske (right) with the mayor of Frankfurt before unveiling ceremony, which took place at Mr. Loske's birthday on April 26, 1951

If you come to Frankfurt, don't miss the chance to walk along the river Main and look for the Loske sundial! Order some sunshine for that occasion and then try to find the town where you come from. If you come from a big town, you might have a good chance that it is among the 200 locations which are carved into the world time ring. Adjust it and read the apparent local time of your home town. After that work you may have a rest on a near by bench and don't forget to think also a bit about the creator of this beautiful sundial: Lothar M. Loske!



[Langeloth & Kriegler standing besides the sundial]

Reinhold Kriegler, Bremen/ Germany in cooperation with Martha A. Villegas, Torreón/ México