

Professor Zlatko Kvaček's seventieth

On the occasion of my first visit in Northern Bohemia in 1964, I met Zlatko Kvaček for the first time in Pysk near Česká-Kamenice, in the summer house of the well known palaeozoologist Prof. Zdeněk Špinar (1916–1995). At that time we could not foresee that it would mark the beginning of a long professional relationship and friendship. Because of this long friendship, I refer to him here by his given name Zlatko (“Golden”), as he is known by his many friends and colleagues, while recognizing that his title of Professor Dr. Zlatko Kvaček is a more appropriate in formally recognizing his academic achievements.

Zlatko Kvaček was born on July 28th 1937 in Prague as the second child of the physician, Dr. Jiří Kvaček and his wife Marie Kvačková. His father was a dentist and after the war became a specialist for lung diseases. Zlatko's sister Jiřina was then two years old.

Frequent trips with his parents to visit his grandparents in Českomoravská vysočina, near the boundary between East Bohemia and Moravia, made a deep impression on him in his childhood. Especially his grandfather Josef Kvaček, who was a director of a primary school, fascinated Zlatko. He was the one who introduced him to science and also to botany. Zlatko collected plants with his friend Pavel Veselý, now a physician, and created his own herbarium. They made several field trips to study botany especially to the Tatra Mountains in Slovakia.

One of the peaks of his early botanical activities, was an award from the former Institute of Conservation of the Ministry of Culture of Czechoslovakia which funded his participation in a collection trip to East Slovakia, known as Latorica Project in 1954.

After primary school Zlatko attended grammar school in Prague-Libeň, where he met his wife Hanka. They married on July 6th 1961 and had two children, Jiří and Lucie. Both children followed in the professional interests of their parents: Dr. Jiří Kvaček works as palaeobotanist at the National Museum in Prague and Dr. Lucie Závorová is a dentist like her mother.

Zlatko studied at the Faculty of Science of the Charles University Prague, where he worked as an assistant in the Institute of Palaeontology from 1958 to 1960. He finished his studies in 1960 as Graduate Geologist, which is equivalent to the German Diploma in Geology. He submitted his Diploma thesis “Tertiary plant remains from Julius Fučík Mine, in Želénky near Duchcov” in the Geologic-Geographic Faculty of the Charles University Prague. From 1960 to 1963 Zlatko was employed as a geologist in the “Mining company Geologický průzkum n.p. Dubí” in the exploration of non-coal resources. From 1963 to 1965 he was a post-graduate student at the Institute of Geology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (ČSAV) in Prague. During that time he worked under the supervision of Prof. Dr. František Němejc on his Ph.D. thesis “Evolution of the brown coal swamp flora in Bohemia during the early Tertiary”, which he submitted in 1966 at the Institute of Geology of the ČSAV. Until 1991, he was employed at this Institute as a researcher. In 1985 he defended his Dr.Sc. thesis on “Cuticle analysis of Neogene trees from Central Europe” at the Institute of Geology and Geotechnology of the ČSAV, Prague. From 1985 to 1987 Dr. Kvaček was additionally a part-time curator for palaeobotany in the Department of Palaeontology of the National Museum Prague.

Zlatko started his teaching activities in 1976 with lectures on palaeontology, specifically palaeobotany, at the Faculty of Sciences of the Charles University. In 1991 he was appointed Associate Professor and in 1998 promoted to Full Professor for Palaeobotany. From 1996 to 2000, he was also head of the Institute of Palaeontology while continuing his systematic lectures on palaeobotany and historic geology for graduate students. Since his retirement in 2003 he is still active in research.

His activities in the education of palaeobotanists are reflected in the supervision of eight diploma theses and five doctoral students. Additionally, he was on the committees of six foreign

research students with fellowships from Hungary, Austria, Poland, Greece and former Yugoslavia. Since 1969 he has presented lectures and seminars at foreign scientific institutions like the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany Lucknow, the North London University, London, the Botanical Komarov Institute, St. Petersburg, Geological Institute, Moscow, the University of Vienna, and the University of Budapest.

Zlatko's scientific activities cover a wide range of topics and methods. They are based on cooperation with many European and American colleagues.

Tertiary and Upper Cretaceous floras from the Czech Republic were studied using cuticular analysis and published in monographs in cooperation with Erwín Knobloch, Čestmír Bůžek, and František Holý. The same holds for Upper Cretaceous floras together with Prof. František Němejc. Intensive studies in systematics and evolution of Cretaceous and Tertiary higher plants are important research areas, in which Zlatko and the author cooperated for several decades.

Zlatko has also excelled in the study of taphonomy and palaeovegetation, particularly reconstruction of vegetation. In this field he collaborated mainly with Michael C. Boulter, Richard Hubard (London) and Johanna Kovar-Eder (Stuttgart). Zlatko played a major role in international projects like the IUBS Plant Fossil Record (co-ordinator M.C. Boulter) and Database of European Neogene Floras (co-ordinator J. Kovar-Eder). Of special importance were the international collaborations in describing Paleogene and Neogene floras and revisions of older collections with a special focus on cuticle analysis, in which Zlatko played a leading role. His major cooperating colleagues were, in addition to Harald Walther, Lutz Kunzmann (Dresden), Dieter H. Mai (Berlin), Volker Wilde, Friedman Schaarschmidt (Frankfurt M.), Walter Jung, Josef Bogner (Munich), Johanna Kovar-Eder (Stuttgart); Viliam Sitár, Michal Kováč (Bratislava); Leon Stuchlik, Ewa Zastawniak (Kraków); Lilla Hably, Boglárka Erdei, Maria Barbacka (Budapest); Dorde Mihailovič, (Beograd); David K. Ferguson (Vienna); Evangelos Velitzelos, Dimitrios Velitzelos (Athens); Mikhail A. Akhmetiev (Moscow); Michail C. Boulter, Richard Hubard, Margaret Collinson (London); Else Marie Friis, Paul Kenrik, Thomas Denk (Stockholm); Sven B. Manum (Oslo); Steven R. Manchester, David L. Dilcher (Gainesville), Howard E. Schorn (Berkeley), and William C. Rember (Moscow, USA).

More than 190 scientific publications and six monographs document Zlatko's research activities. The book on Tertiary Floras „Třetihorní rostliny” (Bílina, Northern Bohemia) with excellent photos and educational illustrations shows his interest in the popularization of palaeobotany among society. Zlatko was the organiser or co-organiser of several symposia which have helped to establish and strengthen collaborative efforts and friendships among palaeobotanists internationally. Particularly important in this regard was his part in organizing the international symposium “Advances in Angiosperm Palaeontology” that was held in Liblice near Prague in 1977. Prior to 1990, symposia were the only possibility for researchers from the “East” to get into contact with colleagues from the “West”. I also want to acknowledge Zlatko's suggestions of research projects associated with the writing of time-consuming grant proposals for their realisation. For these numerous initiatives we want to thank Zlatko.

A number of Zlatko hobby activities are characteristic of his rich life. The most important is palaeobotany and the collection of modern plants, but there is the study of classical music via the piano, gardening and working on a summer house that he continuously improves. He also takes a great interest in travelling with his wife.

Zlatko is characterized by human warmth, great understanding, modesty, and incredible fairness and equity. We wish him all the best and a good time with his dear wife Hanka, especially health and continuing pleasure in palaeobotany. Connected with these wishes are many thanks for his great commitment and enthusiasm for and the advancement of palaeobotany especially of the European Tertiary.

Harald Walther, Natural History State Collections Dresden, Museum of Mineralogy and Geology, 01109 Dresden, Koenigsbruecker Landstrasse 159, Germany; e-mail: h.walther.dresden@t-online.de

* For information and help on the manuscript my thanks are due to Dr. Jiří Kvaček, Prague, and for linguistic improvements to Dr. Clara Stefen and Adela Ibsen, Dresden.