

Eightieth anniversary of Professor Kazimierz Szczepanek

Kazimierz Szczepanek was born on January 29th 1931 in Pietrzejowa, a village which now is a part of Ropczyce in Podkarpacie province. He attended primary school, junior high, high school, and pedagogical school in Ropczyce, and after matriculation in 1949 went to Kraków to commence biological studies at the Jagiellonian University. In 1954 he defended his M.Sc. thesis entitled “Vascular flora of coniferous forests of Nowy Targ particularly including changes caused by human action in the last years” at the Department of Plant Taxonomy and Geography under the guidance of Professor Bogumił Pawłowski. During his studies, he acquainted himself with methods of palaeobotanical research undertaking casual works at the Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences. These works have directed the later scientific interests of Kazimierz Szczepanek. After having finished his studies he started working as an assistant at the Faculty of Plant Taxonomy and Geography of the Jagiellonian University. As soon as the Institute of Botany opened a Palaeobotanical Laboratory, he commenced to work there as senior assistant under the supervision of Professor Władysław Szafer. His main research project concerned the Late Glacial and Holocene history of plants of the Holy Cross Mountains (Góry Świętokrzyskie), based on pollen analysis of eight profiles from peat deposits. His research led him to conclude that changes in vegetation were caused by climate, and also to identify the influence of human activity on vegetational and environmental change. Results of that research were presented in his Ph.D. thesis entitled “Late Glacial and Holocene vegetation history of the Holy Cross Mountains”, defended in 1961 at the Jagiellonian University. From 1962, Kazimierz Szczepanek has worked as adjunct and from 1968 as lecturer at the Faculty of Plant Taxonomy and Geography at the Jagiellonian University.

The Low Beskid Mountain Range represented by profiles of the Cergowa Mountain and Szymbark-Kamionka area were focus of his investigation on the vegetational history based on pollen and macroscopic plant remains analyses. Then, Kazimierz Szczepanek again became interested in the Holy Cross Mountains, and in particular, their southern foreland near Staszów where over 200 karstic sink holes are known that are filled with organic sediments. Thorough analysis of pollen and macroscopic plant remains from deposits filling 11 karstic sink holes allowed him to reconstruct the history of vegetation from the decline of the Late Glacial to modern times. The results of that research formed the basis of his habilitation at the Jagiellonian University where, in 1970, he received the habilitated doctor degree.

Between the years 1971–1973 K. Szczepanek was head of the Department of Plant Taxonomy and Phytogeography and later between 1973–1991 director of the Botanic Garden Jagiellonian University. So, for the 18 years with his manager’s eye he was watching over that specific area, taking care not only of the greenery but mainly of the employers from the scientific and technical sections. Besides that, from 1988 to 2003 he was managing the Department of Palaeobotany at the Institute of Botany, Jagiellonian University.

Kazimierz Szczepanek was lucky being a disciple of several famous professors: Władysław Szafer, Bogumił Pawłowski and later Jan Kornaś. It was the time of close cooperation between botanists of both institutions, Polish Academy of Sciences and Jagiellonian University, which resulted in scientific discussions and friendships that still last.

The 1980’s united almost all Polish palynologist around an international programme under the auspices of UNESCO, the IGCP – International Geological Correlation Programme – project 58 “Palaeohydrological changes in the temperate zone during the last 15 000 years”. In subproject

A “Lake and mire environments”, Kazimierz Szczepanek examined biogenic deposits from Drogomyśl site in the valley of lower Vistula (Niedziałkowska et al. 1985). In subproject B, he continued his palaeoecological studies in the region of the Holy Cross Mountains (Szczepanek 1982) and the Low Beskid Mountain Range (Szczepanek 1987). The results of these studies were included in a synthetic elaboration for Poland and Europe, published by M. Ralska-Jasiewiczowa and M. Latałowa in 1996 in a book edited by B.E. Berglund, H.J.B. Birks, M. Ralska-Jasiewiczowa, and H.E. Wright (“Palaeoecological events during the last 15 000 years”, J. Wiley and Sons, Chichester – New York). The palynological data were submitted to the European database in Arls, from which they are available for further studies. They were used for instance in publications: “The spread of deciduous *Quercus* throughout Europe since the last glacial period” (Forest Ecology and Management 156: 27–48) and “The temperature of Europe during the Holocene reconstructed from pollen data (Quaternary Science Reviews 22: 1701–1716).

Kazimierz Szczepanek was also a co-author of the chapters describing the spread of *Alnus*, *Abies alba*, *Picea abies*, and *Pinus cembra* in the synthesis “Late Glacial and Holocene history of vegetation in Poland based in isopollen maps” edited by M. Ralska-Jasiewiczowa et al. (2004).

Apart from palynological investigations of the Holocene profiles, Kazimierz Szczepanek also examined Pleistocene micro- and macrofloras. In 1960s he investigated the *Dryas* flora from Makoszyn near Sandomierz. Later he studied Eemian interglacial deposits at Nidzica near Olsztyn, Ustroń and in the Vistula valley near Tarnobrzeg. On the Sandomierz Upland he examined a new flora of the Mazovian Interglacial (Kosmowska-Suffczyńska & Szczepanek 1981).

Aeropalynology, a new scientific interest of Kazimierz Szczepanek was his answer for allergologists’s needs. As always he committed to that affair with all his heart. As a head of a project “The Studies of content of pollen and plant spores in the air (aerobiological monitoring)” Kazimierz Szczepanek organized a measuring net in Poland according to methods recommended by IAA (International Association for Aerobiology). It initiated a “school of palynologists”, in which participants led by Kazimierz Szczepanek completed three doctoral theses, and one PhD project continues at the present time. In 1995, Kazimierz Szczepanek received the scientific title



Professor and his associate group.

From the left: Danuta Zdebska, Jacek Madeja, Krystyna Harmata, Sławomir Florjan. Phot. A. Mróz

of Professor, and since 1996 he has been Associate Professor at the Jagiellonian University. He let himself known as a good tutor perfectly carrying on all classes with students assigned to him in laboratories, during field practices, seminars and lectures. He was also a promoter of several M.Sc. and doctor theses. The summer field courses were the most important didactic achievement of Kazimierz Szczepanek. Between 1957 and 1974 he run several trips to Klikuszowa in the Gorce Mountains as inter-collegial, interdisciplinary summer classes for students after their 3rd year of biology studies.

He organized various botanical travels abroad. In 1980 he participated in the American-Polish Archaeological Expedition to Egypt, and also in an expedition to south-eastern Africa (1975–1976). When he was director of the Botanical Garden at the Jagiellonian University, he visited many different gardens abroad including the Botanical Garden in North Korea.

He was rewarded many times by the provost of Jagiellonian University for his scientific and didactic work. In 1965, he also received an individual 3rd class prize from Minister of Higher Education for upbringing and organizing the didactic process at the Jagiellonian University. He also was honored with Golden Cross of Merit, and the Order of Polonia Restituta. For his contribution to development of the Society of Friends of Science at Przemyśl, he was honored in 1984 with a medal of seventy five years of the Society.

Professor Szczepanek was a member of Scientific Council of the Institute of Botany, Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków (1987–2002), Consulting Council of Botanical Garden of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (1985–1991), Consulting Council of the Institute of Agronomy and Forestry of Tropical Countries at the Agriculture Academy in Kraków (1987), Commission of Social Healthcare (from 1980) and Commission of Quaternary Palaeogeography (from 1979), Kraków branch of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Committee of Quaternary Researches of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1978–1990), Editorial Council of “Botanical News” Magazine (1984–1990) and member of Board of the Polish Botanical Society (from 1989).

Now, 10 years into Professor Kazimierz Szczepanek retirement, he still continues scientific work. A fantastic colleague, sensitive and never refusing help, even now he participates in coring expeditions in order to obtain new samples. Recently he participated in a project of Quaternary investigation in Ukraine. During field work he not only supervises the work of the other people but also does the coring himself.

We wish Professor Kazimierz Szczepanek further achievements in scientific research, interesting travels which were always important for him, joy from the work with students and satisfaction from their achievements, and many years in good health and good humor.

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