

## Memories of Professor Emeritus RNDr. Blanka Pacltová, CSc.

For anyone whose thoughts veer to micropalaeobotanical research at the Faculty of Science of the Charles University in Prague, the first name that must come to mind is that of Blanka Pacltová. Her entire professional life, from 1955 through her retirement in 1995 was closely connected with the Faculty of Science and its palaeobotanical laboratory. Last year she saw her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, and despite certain age-related health problems, her zeal for living and new areas of palaeontological research remained undiminished. Unfortunately, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 marked the final steps on her path through life.

Blanka Pacltová was born October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1928 in Nachanice. Her youth was spent on her parents' agricultural estate in Kratonohy, near Hradec Králové. She went to school in Prague, initially at a language school, where she studied German and English in 1943 – 1944, but this was interrupted by the occupation of our country by the totalitarian regime. Simultaneously, she attended evening classes at the gymnasium in London Street, and after the occupation, attended the gymnasium full time, which ended with her graduation in 1948. She was accepted to the Faculty of Science of the Charles University in Prague in the fields of chemistry and biology, and after founding of the geological faculty, she studied geology-palaeontology, specializing in palaeobotany. During the last year of her study, she began working as an assistant in the palaeontological department, under Professor F. Němejc. In 1952, she got her doctor's degree in natural science, and in 1959, began independent teaching at the school. In 1963, she was named an associate professor of Charles University in this field, and in 1990, her exemplary pedagogical and research activities were rewarded with the title of professor.

Prof. B. Pacltová was essentially the founder of Czech palynology. She combined teaching her students with building the field of palaeopalynology, and was able to demonstrate its necessity for not only addressing questions of development in organic life, but also the utility of palynology in practice. With assistance from Professor O. Kodým, she built a specialised palynological laboratory and established a library. She trained a generation of specialists, focused on study of the pre-Cambrian and Palaeozoic – M. Konzalová, M. Vavrdová, M. Boháčová, O. Fatka, P. Dufka, J. Bek; Cretaceous – M. Svobodová, R. Pátová; Tertiary and Quaternary – M. Konzalová, E. Hubená, E. Planderová, P. Snopková. Professor B. Pacltová was also a distinguished educator of doctoral candidates (P. Ganguli of India, M. Juhász of Hungary, G. Lashin of Egypt, N. Doláková of Czechia), and collaborated with distinguished foreign researchers, like J. A. Doyle, G. Norris of USA, H. Pflug of Germany and N. F. Hughes of England.

From 1955 to until her retirement in 1995, Professor B. Pacltová led elective lectures and exercises in micropalaeobotany, created procedures for palaeobotanical research (1963) and the foundations of micropalaeobotany (1990), and co-authored a textbook on general palaeontology (Špinar and Pacltová 1992).

Professor B. Pacltová's professional output is extensive. Her research on peat was a follow-up to the work by Prof. K. Rudolph. As an extern of the State Cultural Heritage Institute, she worked on peat bogs in Krkonoše and the flooded lands behind the Orava dam. With professors Z. Špinar and F. Němejc, she worked on research in the South Bohemian basins, where she was able to demonstrate Senonian age of the Klikov Formation, and wrote a monograph on Tertiary sporomorphs of the Mydlovary Formation. With Professor F. Němejc, she worked on the Tertiary coal-forming basins of Slovakia, discovered Tertiary deposits near Plzeň, addressed problems of bedding geology with Professor Z. Pouba, studied angiosperm evolution with Professor N. Hughes, and did practical geology for organizations like the Czech uranium industry, Geindustria, the Czech Geological Survey, the Archaeological Institute, and so on.

In the field of Cretaceous palynology, she became the acknowledged expert, and her research on pollen grains of angiosperms of the Normapolles complex, assembled into a monograph, received international acclaim (Góczán et al. 1967). Last but not least is her study of the oldest organisms of the Precambrian and micropalaeobotanical research on the origins of Barrandian stromatolites (with Professor Z. Pouba), on which she created a new research methodology.

Professional and personal contacts with foreign colleagues were important to her, like Prof. N.F. Hughes (Cambridge), Prof. W. Kruzsch (Berlin), Prof. J. A. Doyle (California), Academician A. Oparin (Moscow), Prof. H. Méon (Lyon) and others.

Professor B. Pacltová published over 200 original works (Dašková 2008), covering essentially all geological formations and microfossils of all plant groups. Besides her scientific and pedagogical work at Charles University, she was a member of many international and domestic scientific organizations. During the years 1968 – 1974, she was the director of the International Palynological Association, on the board of the Commission for Palynology and Origin of Life, a member of the editorial board of the *Pollen et Spores* journal, a correspondent for *Stromatolite Newsletter*, on the board of the Czech Geological Society, and director of the board of Professional palaeontologists. She helped to organize numerous domestic and international conferences. Her life-long efforts in the field have been recognized by numerous awards, primarily the gold medal of the Faculty of Science of



**Prof. RNDr. Blanka Pacltová, CSc. in October 2018**  
**18 October 1928 – 2 February 2019**  
(photo by J. Kvaček)

the Charles University in Prague, which she received for founding the field of micropalaeobotany, the medal of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences as part of the Laboratory of Evolutionary Biology (1979), and the medal of Professor Szafer from the Polish Academy of Science in Krakow (1986).

All her life, Blanka Pačtová was a shining example of how to successfully combine a scientific education with active problem-solving in a variety of fields. Her professional, yet warm and personal approach left a life-long impression on her students. She was respected not only by her students, but also by numerous colleagues, domestic and foreign. Her colleagues will remember her as a friendly and empathic person. Long live her memory!

## References

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