

70th birthday of Vlasta Zukalová

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Vlasta Zukalová as a pioneer worker in bioevents

The Brno meeting 1995 was dedicated to V. Zukalová because she introduced essential approaches and pioneer studies concerning bioevents. The influence of Masaryk University in Brno since the 1960's has been evident, where relation of fauna to palaeoenvironmental and ecological relations among the groups / guilds of fauna have been emphasised.

Beginning with her first studies, we find remarks on the relationship to the sedimentary environment; especially on the ability of amphiporids to survive in extreme conditions were stressed. A few years later, we can find the first outlines of individual communities of the Devonian sessile benthos, including the outlines of their evolutionary and ecological relations.

During the seventies, V. Zukalová (influenced by Canadian papers by Fischbuch, Embry, and Kobluk, and co-operating with other young Czech co-workers) formed the concept of cyclical evolution of Moravian platform reef fauna. Her data about the one cycle development of stromatoporoids and associated faunas, subsequent collapses and reorganisations of the communities belong to the high points of Moravian palaeontological literature (including the so-called grey publications).

She was also among the pioneer investigators that stressed the Frasnian – Famennian crisis, as a significant global event [17]. On the other hand, she also documented selective fluctuations of the background extinction, especially in the Givetian – Frasnian sequences of the Moravian Karst.

As a result, we must also acknowledge her prominent role in the education of new specialists. Many colleagues from Moravia, including us, profited from the work in the scientific team of V. Zukalová during the seventies.

A few words about life and professional career of Vlasta Zukalová

RNDr. Vlasta Zukalová, retired research worker of the Brno branch of the Czech Geological Survey, celebrated her seventieth birthday on August 29, 1995.

Born in Břeclav, southern Moravia, Vlasta Zukalová, née Jadrná, started her professional career in palaeontology after a prolonged period when she worked as a dressmaker. She graduated from the Brno Masaryk University at 1956 after studying palaeontology under the guidance of professors V. Kalabis and J. Tejkal, Brno, and Z. Špinar and F. Prantl, Charles University Prague. When at the University, she started her work on Devonian stromatoporoids with the staff of the Brno Central Geological Survey. Her research on Devonian stromatoporoids resulted in an outstanding monograph. Besides stromatoporoids, she worked on biostratigraphy of Moravian Palaeozoic, particularly that underlying

Carpathian foredeep and nappes, and on Devonian and Lower Carboniferous corals, foraminifers, and algae. She further studied the relationships of Moravian Palaeozoic faunas, problems of faunal extinctions, and the general classification of unmetamorphosed Devonian rocks of the Moravo-Silesian region.

She added to the knowledge of the stratigraphic significance of Devonian stromatoporoids, particularly the branching forms, which are now handled with greater esteem. Furthermore, she followed developing fields of investigation, such as complex biostratigraphy, employing several fossil groups simultaneously. She also always stressed close relations between sedimentology and fauna. In Moravia, the palaeontological studies in slightly metamorphosed limestones, studies about the cyclicity and rhythms, and investigations of the Devonian bioevents were also initiated by her.

The results of the work of Vlasta Zukalová are widely utilised and highly valued both in the Czech Republic and abroad. Her careful work and her modesty as well as her irresistible Moravian sweet dishes earned her not only international acknowledgement, but also the solid friendship of many of her colleagues. Many students of Moravian Palaeozoic corals and other faunas, including the authors of this paper, profited greatly from her ideas and consider themselves her grateful pupils.

Vlasta Zukalová has retired and enjoys her grandchildren in her nice home at Brno; she nevertheless contemplates with concern the coral research scene and is ready to assist anybody in both his or her work and life.

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