

# Jaroslav Kraft died

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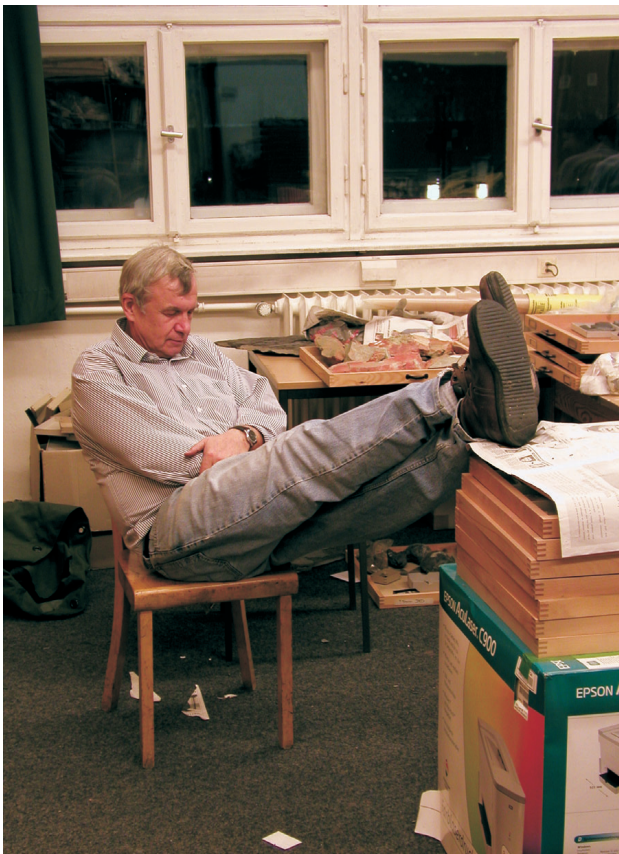
This issue of the *Bulletin of Geosciences* is dedicated to the memory of Jaroslav Kraft (born April 9, 1940 – died January 10, 2007), an important, internationally recognised Czech palaeontologist and a prominent specialist in dendroid graptolites. Jaroslav was born into the family of bookbinder and enthusiastic fossil collector Jan Kraft. In this fostering environment, his education in the natural sciences began early, especially in the areas of geology and palaeontology. After finishing his study at the Charles University Prague, Jaroslav took a position as a geologist at the Geologický průzkum Praha enterprise (“Geological exploration”), branch Stříbro, following an administrative allocation. During the interval from 1965 to 1974, he was employed as a research assistant in the Museum of Western Bohemia (Západočeské muzeum) which was one of the most prolific periods in his career. In 1974 he was transferred to the n. p. Geoindustria Praha Company as a geologist, a position he occupied until 1980. For a brief period from 1980 to 1981 he worked in the department of Collections at the Central Geological Institute (now Czech Geological Survey), in cooperation with Milan Šnajdr. From 1982 to 1988, Jaroslav worked as geologist and palaeontologist in the County branch of the State Institution for Cultural Heritage and Nature Conservation in Plzeň. He also worked with the Dr. Bohuslav Horák Museum in Rokycany as an external specialist during the years 1963–1988; afterwards as internal curator (1988 to 1994). It should be noted that Dr. B. Horák was held in high esteem by Jaroslav, and this relationship strongly motivated his activities. J. Kraft attained his RNDr. degree in 1973, while he received his CSc. Degree in 1984 after prolonged delays for political reasons. J. Kraft was appointed Assistant Professor at the University of Western Bohemia in Plzeň in 1998, though he had acted as external assistant at this university since 1994. J. Kraft also dedicated much of his activities to establishing protection status for numerous important palaeontological and geological localities in the Plzeň and Rokycany areas. The very brief biography given above illustrates the numerous employment and professional positions that Jaroslav held during his lifetime. This was due largely to the fact that the communist regime considered J. Kraft to be a politically unreliable person, as he actively practiced the Protestant religion.

Though Jaroslav experienced harsh treatment by the political and state administration for much of his life, his career held numerous satisfying highlights and much professional success. In addition to publication of numerous important palaeontological papers, J. Kraft significantly contributed to improving the professional standards of the Dr. B. Horák Museum in Rokycany. He accomplished this through implementing a major change in curatorial documentation and the meticulous processing of palaeontological collections, including computer documentation. Through this work, he built the Dr. B. Horák Museum into one of the most important collections of Ordovician fossil in the world.

It was an unfortunate development that after many years of intense and prolific research and curatorial activities in the Dr. Bohuslav Horák Museum in Rokycany, J. Kraft had to resign from the position of curator due to differences with museum management. Even after leaving his post, J. Kraft tried to ensure that a professional curator was found for the palaeontological collections, but unfortunately he was unsuccessful. After returning to the collections of the Museum of Western Bohemia in Plzeň, J. Kraft continued to be a prominent curator and palaeontologist. For numerous younger palaeontologists and visitors to the palaeontology department in the Plzeň or Rokycany museums, it was a pleasant opportunity to meet the calm, optimistic personality of J. Kraft. His sense of mild, gentle humour and empathy extended to colleagues and museum visitors alike.

Jaroslav was fortunate to have found a competent collaborator in his son Petr. The twosome Kraft & Kraft co-authored several dozen publications in peer-reviewed regional and international journals. Working with a number of colleagues, the two palaeontologists became a notably productive team which successfully completed the extensive project on the Ordovician in Bohemia as an international standard for the Mediterranean region. In 1999, Jaroslav and Petr Kraft, along with colleagues from Prague, organised the highly successful 9<sup>th</sup> ISOS conference (International Symposium on Ordovician System) in Prague.

This period and the active attendance at the next 10<sup>th</sup> ISOS in San Juan, Argentina, may be considered as a culmination of this fruitful scientific life. Even in this time, although widely honored and respected, he still remained gentle, mild and unpretentious person. We all, who had the honor to know him, will thankfully remember him.



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