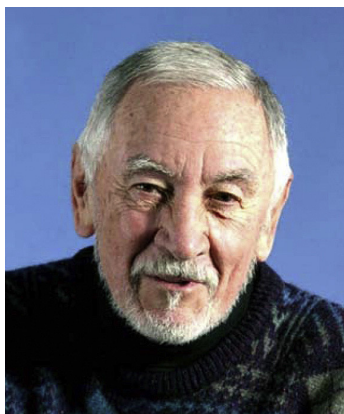


## AN OBITUARY NOTICE

### **prof. Ing. Dr. Miroslav Kutílek, DrSc.**



It is my sad duty to report that the very well-known and famous professor, scientist, teacher, colleague and friend Professor Dr. MIROSLAV KUTÍLEK passed away on October 4, 2016 at the age of almost eighty-nine.

MIROSLAV KUTÍLEK, or MIREK, as we called him, was born on October 8, 1927. He spent most of his student and working life at the Faculty of Civil Engineering, Czech Technical University in Prague (CTU), Czech Republic. It was at this university where he obtained all his degrees. First came MSc. (Ing.) in 1951, followed by the Ph.D. diploma in 1956. Then, ten years later (1966) he defended his dissertation and was awarded the highest academic title of DrSc.

MIREK commenced his very dynamic professional career in the Department of Drainage and Irrigation in the same faculty at the CTU. In 1952 he became a young teacher and within ten years had progressed to the position of Associate Professor (1962). Finally, in 1973, he was appointed full Professor of soil physics and soil hydrology. At this point I should highlight the fact that apart from his busy involvement in the CTU work MIREK was also active at many different institutions all over the world. They included Baghdad University, Iraq, University of Khartoum, Sudan, L'Institut de Mécanique, Grenoble, France, University of California, Davis, USA, Uppsala University, Sweden, Technical University Braunschweig, Germany, College on Soil Physics at International Centre of Theoretical Physics, Trieste, Italy and University of Bayreuth, Germany. Moreover, he held a prestigious post as an expert for FAO and IAEA.

MIREK's professional career came to an end in 1993 when he retired from his job in the CTU. This, of course, did not mean he had stopped all his scientific activities. As could have been expected from this extraordinary man, he continued writing scientific books as well as articles, and he also wrote fiction under the pen-name of MAREK HOFMAN. Additionally, he worked as an editor-in-chief of international scientific journals such as *Soil Technology* (1990–1991) and *Soil and Tillage Research* (1992–2013).

During MIREK's life his work was honoured several times. In 1975 he was awarded the Silver Felber Medal of the CTU in Prague and in 2010 the President of the Czech Republic decorated him with the Medal of Merit, an award of the Czech Republic for service in science.

MIREK was very much involved in international scientific societies. He was president of the soil physics section of the International Soil Science Society (1986–1990) and, later, an honorary member of this society. Similarly, he had worked in the Czech Soil Science Society in which he also became an honorary member.

His research was focused on the following topics: adsorption of water vapour in soils, non-linear transport of water in soil, distribution of soil pores according to retention curves and adsorption, bi-modal and n-modal distribution of soil pores (consequences of it for unsaturated flow) and principles of the climatic change.

It is a pity that this list of MIREK's activities cannot express strongly enough his enthusiasm, his outstanding sense of humour which he spread around him, his energy which he applied to day-to-day activities as well as to professional and personal conflict situations, which had not always ended in success. He was one of the scientists who supported the links and relationships between scientists from different countries in the world outside any political and ideological divisions. He brought up his students in this respect. He organised many international symposia, meetings and workshops in Prague, Bratislava and elsewhere regardless of the government (political) regulations. I have to comment that he was very often successful.

At this point I remember an interesting example of MIREK's unique sense of humour, his personality and also his way of dealing with daily life. It is a story involving his great-granddaughter, which MIREK once

told me. This anecdotic dialogue was even published in 2014 in the Soil & Tillage Research by Professor Ole Wendroth, soil physicist and editor of the journal. It went like this:

MIREK's great-granddaughter: "Grand pappy, where are you going on your bicycle?"

MIREK: "To the cemetery".

MIREK's great-granddaughter: "Who will bring the bicycle back?"

This short story is documenting MIREK's manner of self-irony, humour and a deeply human way of thinking, his ability to keep things in perspective, to understand the children's straight and uncomplicated way of thinking. Actually the bike is not important here, what is important is that MIREK's great-granddaughter cannot miss her grand pappy and he is supposed to come back to her every time.

Unfortunately, in October of 2016 this special wish cannot be granted anymore. MIREK KUTÍLEK has left not only his great-granddaughter on her own but also all the people who loved him, all his former students, his colleagues, and friends around the world.

This end of story has left over a message for all of us that, sadly, this time MIREK will never come back from his journey on the bike to the cemetery.

He will be missed by all of us.

*Svatopluk Matula, Prague*