

AN OBITUARY NOTICE

Ing. JOSEF PEŠEK, DrSc.



Ing. JOSEF PEŠEK, DrSc. long-time member of the editorial board of the Czech Journal of Genetics and Plant Breeding, suddenly died on October 14. He just walked out off his home to visit a colleague when his heart, which had experienced a complicated surgery earlier, refused to serve further. A few weeks ago he had celebrated amid his large beloved family and friends his 75th birthday and his mind was still full of new projects, that went away with him. We will miss him as an outstanding statistician and a good friend and colleague with high personal integrity. Due to his high esteem as a statistician, his language skills in English and Russian and to his excellent contacts with colleagues in the East and the West he represented a bridge between the two otherwise separate worlds during the communist era and in the years that followed. He was born on 5th September 1934 at Radim in Eastern Bohemia. After studies of statistics and geodesy at the Czech Technical University at Prague, where he graduated in 1957, he worked for the state enterprise Agroprojekt. At the same time he enrolled in numerical mathematics at the J. E. Purkyně University of Brno and lectured statistics at the Agricultural University of Brno. In 1966 he became scientist at the Agriculture Research Institute at Hrušovany near Brno. There, under Prof. JAN ROD's guidance, he reached the degree Candidate of Science (corresponding then to Ph.D) in biometrics and analysis of field trials. Together with Prof. ROD he founded the Commission of Biometrics of the former Czechoslovak, now Czech, Academy of Agricultural Sciences. For many years he was secretary and chairman of the commission. During his post-doctorate fellowship from 1968 to 1970 at the Agricultural University of Winnipeg in Canada he became a close cooperator of Prof. R.J. BAKER and investigated the efficiency of selection methods in plant populations, using Monte Carlo simulations. The non-weighted selection index, proposed by him together with Prof. BAKER, became since a widely used tool in plant breeding. Other fellowships enabled him to work temporarily as a visiting scientist at the Agricultural University of Wageningen and at the Institute of Genetics and Cytology at Novosibirsk. As a skilled programmer, J. PEŠEK transformed his scientific knowledge in selection theory into software useful for breeders, which became part of his dissertation for the degree Doctor of Sciences, received in 1984. The programme was especially appreciated by breeders of allogamic species in different countries. Dr. PEŠEK was always engaged in spreading biometric knowledge and promoting advanced techniques in agronomy, cultivar testing and breeding by organising conferences and seminars, post-graduate courses, lecturing and guiding selection projects. In 1976 he established the Centre of Biometrics and Computer Technology at Brno, which provided biometric service for breeders and agricultural research institutes, where he coordinated a number of successful projects in agronomy, plant breeding and animal nutrition. The tradition of "Summer School of Biometrics", which he established together with Prof. J. ROD and Prof. R. HONČARIV, attracts every year many young scientists and statistical novices from Central Europe. He was member of an international team of scientists from eastern countries, aimed at "Biometric Analysis and Computer Technology in Plant Breeding". In 1991 he became Deputy Director of the Research Institute of Ecological Agrotechnology

at Hrušovany near Brno. He was member of scientific boards in several research institutions and member of the Editorial Board of the Czech Journal of Genetics and Plant Breeding. He also became chairperson of the EUCARPIA section Biometrics in plant breeding and was the main organiser of its plenary conference at Brno in 1992. He published 107 scientific papers and was co-author of three monographs, published as books in German, Russian and English. A heart attack in 1996 limited his manifold activities. After a heart surgery he lived in retirement with his wife Hana, surrounded by three families of his children with grandchildren. We are thankful for his work and life and will preserve him in our memory.

RNDr. ERIK SCHWARZBACH, Dr. agr. habil.