

KRONIKA POLSKIEGO TOWARZYSTWA GEOLOGICZNEGO CHRONICLE OF THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF POLAND

WITOLD ŻABIŃSKI

(1929 – 2007)



Sudden and unexpected death of professor Witold Żabiński on 15th January 2007 was a very painful and deep shock for his family and numerous colleagues and friends. Undoubtedly, this decease has eliminated from our scientific community not only one of the most outstanding Polish mineralogists and academic teachers but, first of all, a magnificent man of unusual, deeply human personality, very liked by his colleagues and co-workers and admired as talented lecturer and educator of younger scientific personnel.

Witold Żabiński was born on 17th July, 1929 in Cracow as a son of professor and rector of the Economic University. His early born interest in natural sciences, as well as an universal knowledge of the parent part of Poland are documented by edited in 1947, probably the first after World War 2, very interesting, concise "Guide book of Cracow and its environs", published when he was 18 years old!

In 1951, after successful chemical and geological studies, probably thanks to such prominent professors as Marian Książkiewicz and Antoni Gawel, he graduated in geosciences at the Jagellonian University, together with a group of later outstanding geologists: K. Birkenmajer, S. Dżułyński, R. Gradziński, S. Siedlecki, J. Znosko and others, who are the co-authors of his first publications. Therefore, since this period he was the member of the Geological Society of Poland. In the same 1951 year he was employed in the Department of Mineralogy and Petrography of the Academy of Mining and Metallurgy, to which he devoted his scientific career, being in turn its assistant, tutor, assistant professor (1965) and professor (1973), and for several years the head of this Department and the director of the Institute of Geology and Mineral Raw Materials. Besides, Witold Żabiński was the first head and organizer of the Department of Mineralogy of the Silesian University and, after retirement, the head of the Department of Mineralogy, Petrology and Geochemistry of the Jagiellonian University. In 1993 he was elected a corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences. Moreover, after a scientific scholarship in Oxford, he became in 1966 a member of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain. His friendly contacts with such

eminent mineralogists as J. Zussman, M.S. Mackenzie and J. Zeeman resulted in sending by them to Cracow very valuable, often complete, sequences of most important international periodicals, which were the basis of formation of actually fairly rich library of the Mineralogical Society of Poland

Prof. Żabiński was very merited as devoted organizer of scientific activity of Polish mineralogists as one of charter members of the Mineralogical Society of Poland and its president in the years 1980–1994 and long-year representative in the IMA Commission on Physics of Minerals. Besides, for 34 years (1970–2004) he was an excellent editor-in-chief of its periodical "Mineralogia Polonica", following his earlier experience in editing "Mineralogical Transactions" of the Cracovian Branch of the Polish Academy of Sciences. In the years 1982–1990 he was also the president of the Committee on Mineralogical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Thanks to his unusually friendly personality and contacts, Witold Żabiński has developed very fruitful cooperation with many institutions, organizations and scientific societies in Poland and abroad. Such cooperation with specialists in other branches of mineralogical sciences, as well as with chemists and physicists resulted in numerous excellent modern papers on detailed mineralogy and geochemistry of minerals and rocks, as well as in the edition of several valuable academic text-books.

The scientific output of W. Żabiński is contained in more than 200 publications, presented to a large extent in international periodicals. They are reflecting scientific interests of the author in successive periods of his activity. The first of them, published in cooperation with the above mentioned geologists, refer to petrology of igneous and sedimentary rocks of southern Poland. Later papers, including his Ph.D. thesis (1959), are devoted to mineralogy and geochemistry of oxidation zone of the Cracow-Silesian zinc-lead deposits. Particularly valuable are those on zinc-bearing anhydrous and hydrated carbonate minerals. Besides, some publications are dealing with the synthesis of various carbonates.

Probably, the most important were Witold's achievements in the field of detailed mineralogy of the hydrogarnet group, which was the subject of the highly appreciated abroad monograph presented as qualifying for assistant professorship, published in 1965. Later, very detailed studies of these and associated minerals (e.g. vesuvianite) were carried out by him, often in cooperation with other specialists, using such modern physical methods as infrared spectroscopy, EPR, nuclear magnetic resonance, as well as Mössbauer and Raman spectroscopies. Finally, some of his recent publications are devoted to physical properties of clayey, zeolitic and other sorbents.

It should be stressed that this very general review of W. Żabiński's publications, showing merely the fields of his scientific interests, does not reflect their richness and high scientific value, evidencing significant position of our late Friend in international mineralogical areopagus. His outstanding merits as scientist, academic teacher and *spiritus movens* of mineralogical community were highly appreciated by numerous prizes, awards and high national decorations with Commander's Cross of the Polonia Restituta Order at the top.

These outstanding merits were also remembered by his numerous friends, co-workers and pupils, as well as by official delegations of academic and other institutions from Cracow, Sosnowiec, Gliwice, Wrocław and Warsaw, including rectors of several universities, gathered at the funeral in monumental Rakowice cemetery in Cracow.

However, the speakers have characterized not only the above described merits of Prof. Witold Żabiński. They have strongly emphasized that with the death of our dear Friend, we have lost – first of all – a magnificent man of exceptional, deeply human personality, who will be not forgotten and should be a model of a perfect, honest and noble scientist.

Wojciech Narębski

Selected publications of Witold Żabiński

- Siedlecki S. & Żabiński W. 1953. Tufit melafirowy i niższy pstry piaskowiec w Alwernii. *Acta Geologica Polonica*, 3: 441–468.
- Żabiński W., 1960. Charakterystyka mineralogiczna strefy utlenienia śląsko-krakowskich złóż kruszców cynku i ołowiu. *Prace Geologiczne Oddziału Krakowskiego PAN*, 1: 1–99.
- Żabiński W., On the occurrence of dispersed vesuvianite phase in some so called hydrogrossulars. *Bull. Acad. Polon. Sci.*, 12 (3): 149–155.
- Żabiński W., 1966. Hydrogarnets. *Prace Mineralogiczne Oddziału Krakowskiego PAN*, 3: 1–69.
- Żabiński W., 1966. The problem of stacking-order in natural hydrozincites. *Canadian Mineralogist*, 8 (5): 949–652.
- Heflik W. & Żabiński W., 1969. A chromian hydrogrossular from Jordanów (Lower Silesia, Poland). *Mineralogical Magazine*, 37: 241–243.
- Bolewski A., Kubisz J., Żabiński W. 1975, 1982, 1990 (three editions). *Mineralogia ogólna* (academic textbook). Wydawnictwa Geologiczne, Warszawa.
- Żabiński W., 1981. Zincian dolomite: the present state of knowledge. *Mineralogia Polonica*, 11 (1): 19–32.
- Rager H., Żabiński W., Amthauer G., 1984. EPR study of South African grossularites („South African jades“). *Neues Jahrbuch für Mineralogie, Monatshefte*, 10: 433–443.
- Wieser T. & Żabiński W., 1987. Copper arsenate and sulphate minerals from Miedzianka near Kielce (Poland). *Mineralogia Polonica*, 17 (1): 17–42.
- Birkenmajer K., Wieser T., Żabiński W., 1989. Zeolite associations from Tertiary basaltoids of King George Island, West Antarctica. *Mineralogia Polonica*, 20 (1): 3–33.
- Żabiński W. & Paluszkiewicz C., 1994. Infrared spectroscopic evidence of ordering in the vesuvianite structure. *Mineralogia Polonica*, 25 (1): 51–58.
- Żabiński W., Gawęł A., Uriga A., 1998. Monohydrocalcite synthesized once again. *Mineralogia Polonica*, 29 (2): 107–112.
- Żabiński W., Pieczka A., Kraczka J., 2002. Mössbauer study of two axinites from Poland. *Mineralogia Polonica*, 33 (2): 27–34.

Note: A complete list of W. Żabiński's publications will be attached to the obituary to be published in *Mineralogia Polonica*.