

OBITUARY

Farewell to Professor Algirdas Juozapas Gaigalas (1933–2009)



Algirdas Juozapas Gaigalas.
Family archive, 2007.

Doctor Habilitus Algirdas Juozapas Gaigalas, an eminent Lithuanian scientist and public figure, long-term Professor of Vilnius University, died on June 4 after a serious illness. He was one of the best modern Quaternary sedimentologists, a skilled field geologist who with his penetrating eye and mind investigated the composition and structures of clastic deposits and interpreted them within a wide context. Based on the results of his original research, Prof. Gaigalas laid the foundations for the theory of formation of litho–sedimentation cycles of Lithuanian Pleistocene glacial deposits. This theory lied at the basis of his doctoral dissertation (1977). Gaigalas published many important scientific works, which influenced the development of Quaternary studies. His participation at conferences and geological expeditions, where he often announced critical ideas, motivated many young geologists to vow to Quaternary studies.

Algirdas Gaigalas was born on February 27, 1933, in Gaižiūnai village of Pakruojis District. After his geological studies at the Vilnius University (1952–1957), he was engaged in scientific research work at the Institute of Geology and Geography and Geographical Department of Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and at the Lithuanian Institute of Geology. Since 1978 till his death, Gaigalas was a Professor at the Department of Geology and Mineralogy of Vilnius University.

Professor Gaigalas was a recognized scientist and public man, a member of the International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA, 1999), a member of the Commission on the History of Geological Sciences (INHIGEO, 2006), a foreign member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences (1998), President of the Lithuanian Society of Naturalists (1995), and a member of the Lithuanian Geological Society, Lithuanian Geographical Society and Polish Geological Society, chief editor of THOMSON ISI Master List journal “Geologija” (Vilnius), an expert of the Lithuanian Science and Studies Foundation and International Association INTAS, a member of editorial boards of the Minor Lithuanian

Encyclopaedia, international journal “Geochronometria” and “Mokslas ir gyvenimas” (*Science and life*), a patron of the topics about nature discussed in the publications of publishing house “Versmės”, and a tutor and scientific supervisor of the famous Vaclovas Intas’ stone museum in Mosėdis (Skuodas District).

At the Vilnius University, Professor Gaigalas lectured on the Quaternary geology of East Baltic States, and Geomorphology and Quaternary geology, conducted the training field practice for students, and participated in training bachelors, masters, and doctors and habilitated doctors of geology.

Prof. Gaigalas’ scientific works are devoted to Quaternary deposits in Lithuania and some other countries (Poland, Belarus, Russia, Karelia, and Yakut). He developed a petrographic method for moraine investigations and methods for glaciocedimentary research and determined the glaciocedimentation cycles of Lithuanian Pleistocene and lithostratigraphic attributes of moraine structures. Gaigalas was one of the first to study the Baltic Sea bottom moraines and buried palaeovalleys; he described the typical boulders found on the sea bottom. In attempt to solve the complicated problems related with stratigraphic classification of Quaternary, Professor did his best to introduce the modern lithological, geochemical, palaeobotanical, palaeomagnetic Quaternary research methods and the newest absolute dating methods (thermoluminescence, optically stimulated luminescence, electronic rotation resonance, radioactive carbon and oxygen stable isotope shifts).

Together with his colleagues Valerija Čepulytė, Petras Vaitiekūnas, Vytautas Vonsavičius, and Ona Kondratienė, Professor has developed and continually revised the stratigraphic scheme of Quaternary deposits, which could serve as a scientific basis to Late Pleistocene geochronology. Professor Gaigalas was a universal researcher of Quaternary. He achieved much in the fields of Quaternary stratigraphy and palaeogeography, Quaternary research history and archaeology, geological heritage and nature preservation. He investigated the most interesting natural boulder fields of the country and put efforts to legalize them as national protected reserves (Šaukliai, Kulaliai, Igariai, and Erlėnai) and described many valuable landscape objects (boulders and outcrops) contributing to announcing them natural monuments. Gaigalas reported his research results at international geological congresses and conferences held in: Russia (1969, 1978, 1982, and 1984), Canada (1987), Sweden (1988), USA (1989), Belgium (1993), Netherlands (1993), Germany (1995 and 2000), France (1995 and 1997), China (1996), South Africa (1999), and Brazil (2000).

The life and activities of Professor A. J. Gaigalas were unfailingly supported by his family – wife and son. He devoted the noble ideas of his life to science and enlightenment. His activity was outstanding. We will strongly miss him.

Valentinas Baltrūnas, Algimantas Grigelis

ADDENDUM

Professor Gaigalas' selected bibliography in the history of geological sciences

- 'Ignacy Domeyko's contribution to geological knowledge of Lithuania,' *Polskie Towarzystwo Mineralogiczne, Prace Specjalnie, Z. 21, 2002*, Kraków, 9-14.
 - 'Émigré's fate and studies in Paris (1832-1838), Return to motherland,' *In Ignacy Domeyko for Lithuania, France, Chile, Vilnius, 2002*, 43-55, 73-77.
 - 'French stage of the geological way of Ignacy Domeyko,' *In General problems of Belarus, Lithuania and Poland, Minsk, National Academy of Belarus, 2002*, 49-60. [Belarus.].
 - 'Emigration, geological studies in Paris and beginning of work,' *In A. Grigelis (ed.), Ignacy Domeyko 1802-1889. His life, works and contribution to science, Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference, Vilnius, Lithuania, 2002*, 127-142.
 - 'Geology at the Stefan Batory University (1919-1939),' *In Geology in Vilnius University, Vilnius, 2003*, 43-70.
 - 'A description of geological collections of the old Vilnius University based on the analysis of Ignacy Jakowicki's catalogue,' *Geologija, 2004*, 1-14.
 - 'Pioneers of research of Fennoscandian erratic boulders in Baltic countries,' *Abstracts of XXII Baltic conference on the history of science, Vilnius, 2006*, 23-24.
 - 'Development of ideas and peculiarities of Quaternary research in the Baltic States,' *Abstracts of papers, INHIGEO conference History of Quaternary geology and geomorphology, 28-29 July 2006, Vilnius*, 100-102.
 - 'Klaipėda-Mosėdis. Stop 4. Vaclovas Intas National stones museum,' *Field trip Guide book, INHIGEO conference History of Quaternary geology and geomorphology, 30 July-4 August 2006, Vilnius*, 63-66.
 - 'Lietuvos gamtos draugijų visuomeninė veikla,' *Mokslas ir gyvenimas, 2006, No. 11*, 3-5. ['Public activities of Lithuanian nature societies'].
 - 'Pasaulio geologijos mokslų istorikai Vilniuje,' *Mokslas ir gyvenimas, 2006, No. 9*, 46-47. ['The world historians of geological sciences in Vilnius'].
 - 'Mineralinių žaliavų tyrinėtojas,' *Mokslas ir gyvenimas, 2006, No. 4*, 15. ['Researcher of mineral resources'].
 - Graniczny M., and Satkūnas J., 'Pioneers of modern glaciomorphology in Lithuania and Poland,' *Abstracts of papers, INHIGEO conference History of Quaternary geology and geomorphology, 28-29 July 2006, Vilnius*, 33-36.
 - 'Geologija' (Geology), *Universal Lithuanian Encyclopaedia, vol. XII*, Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, Vilnius, 2007, 652-655. [Lith.].
 - 'Kvartero geologija' (Quaternary geology), *Universal Lithuanian Encyclopaedia, vol. XI*, Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, Vilnius, 2007, 368-369. [Lith.].
 - 'Geological sciences,' *Lithuanian Encyclopaedia, Vol. I*, Vilnius, 2008, 648-652. [Lith.].
 - 'Quaternary research in the Baltic countries,' *In History of Quaternary geology and geomorphology, Geological Society of London, Special Publication 301, 2008, London*, 129-140.
 - Graniczny, M., Satkūnas, J., Urban, H., 'Česlovas Pakuckas (Czesław Pachucki): pioneer of modern glaciomorphology in Lithuania and Poland,' *In History of Quaternary geology and geomorphology, Geological Society of London, Special Publication 301, 2008, London*, 141-147.
- Professor Gaigalas recently published over sixty five biographies on Lithuanian scientists in *the Universal Lithuanian Encyclopaedia*, vol. IX, X, addendum to I-X vols., Vilnius, 2006; vol. XI, Vilnius, 2007; vol. XIII-XIV, Vilnius, 2008. [Lith.]