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Reinhard Zetter, an appreciation

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At the beginning of 2020 the Austrian palynologist, Reinhard Zetter, turned 65. This issue, composed of articles by his colleagues and some of his former students, is dedicated to him.

Reinhard (Figure 1) was born on Sunday, 23 January 1955, the last day of the Year of the Horse according to the Chinese calendar. He certainly embodies some of the positive characteristics attributed to a 'horse', being warm-hearted, enthusiastic about those things he believes in, and his independent nature. The latter trait may be the result of growing up at a time when Austria was enjoying its newly-gained independence after ten years of foreign occupation (1945–1955). He was brought up in Pinkafeld (Burgenland, southeast Austria), and this is where he received his primary education (1961–1969). He then attended the protestant grammar school in nearby Oberschützen.

In 1973 he registered at the University of Vienna to train as a secondary school teacher in Biology and Earth Sciences. One of his professors was the palynologist Wilhelm Klaus (1921–1987). Professor Klaus clearly recognised a potential in this young man, because he first appointed him as his demonstrator at the Palaeontological Institute (1977–1979), before offering him an assistant professorship once he finished his Magister (Masters) in June 1979. Three years later Reinhard completed his Doctorate on the fossil record of *Fagus*. One of his jobs as Professor Klaus's assistant was to operate the slide projector during the professor's lectures. When Professor Klaus died prematurely, Reinhard was landed with the task of teaching all the palaeobotanical and palynological courses, until Professor Klaus's successor, David K. Ferguson, was appointed in 1992. Only then could he get back to his beloved research. Although he has more than 30 years teaching experience, it was not until 2002 that he completed his Habilitation (*venia docendi*), which gave him the right to teach. As from 2003 he has been extraordinary professor in the Department of Palaeontology.

Reinhard is one of the 'old school' who believes in research for research's sake, and not as a means for self-advancement. Although he has a natural curiosity to discover the identity of a particular pollen grain, once he has been able to recognise it, finds it difficult to put pen to paper for the sake of others. He would much prefer to go on to examine another indeterminate grain using the single-grain method he developed. This method involves combining the information from light microscopy (LM) and scanning electron microscopy (SEM) (Figure 2). In this way he is often able to make more accurate pronouncements on the identity of the sporomorphs in his samples. For instance, some Cenozoic 'pine' pollen were clearly produced by the Chinese endemic *Cathaya*, some 'oaks' are actually *Decodon*, while so-called palms may belong to the Aponogetonaceae! The consequences for the palaeoecological and palaeoclimatic interpretations of Cenozoic assemblages are considerable. Since scanning electron microscopes have been commercially available for more than 50 years (Cambridge Stereoscan 1965), Reinhard cannot understand why so many palynologists still only use a light microscope.

Although he hates having to write up the results of his work, he has been lucky to have other colleagues, who compose the first draft of a manuscript for Reinhard to improve. Even though he has an easy-going nature, he is a stickler for correct pollen terminology, as his students from Austria, China, Nepal and Thailand have discovered. This penchant for terminology has led him to collaborate on two book projects on that subject. Reinhard's teaching is not all about the microscope. He

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Figure 1. The sun is shining on Reinhard as he stands in the garden outside his office at the Department of Palaeontology, University of Vienna.

makes sure that his students learn how to collect samples properly in the field, how to prepare samples in the laboratory, how to study and analyse palynomorphs, and finally how to present data. He was and is very active in the field and has travelled the globe in search of his beloved pollen (Figure 3). Reinhard is an active member of the palaeobotanical community and regularly takes part in international conferences around the world where he tries to convince other colleagues of the importance of applying the single-grain method in palaeopalynology.

Reinhard is very generous when sharing his knowledge and is always willing to assist students, friends, and colleagues when confronted with pollen-related dilemmas. Throughout the years he has had numerous visitors to learn his single-grain method and also hoping to catch some of Reinhard's intuition on pollen.

Reinhard currently acts as the president of the 'Society for the Promotion of Palynological Research in Austria' (www.autpal.at) and is not only involved in palaeopalynology, but touches on numerous fields such as forensic palynology, melissopalynology, archaeology and recent botany. He is still an active extraordinary professor at the Department of Palaeontology, an appropriate title for an extraordinary personality and scientist.

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Figure 2. Reinhard coaxing the maximum resolution out of the old SEM in the Department of Palaeontology, University of Vienna.

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Figure 3. There are no limits when potential pollen samples are available, even nude diving as a last resort for the optimal aquatic pollen samples (Nitmiluk Gorge, Northern Territory, Australia, in 1988).

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