



## DEDICATION

**Maria Rózkowska**  
**1899—1979**

Maria Rózkowska was born in the Gorzew village near Oborniki Wielkopolskie, north of Poznań on August 15, 1899 into the family of a school teacher. She finished high school in Poznań and in 1919 began to attend the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the newly founded University in Poznań. She graduated in 1923 as one of the first students of that academy. Prior to this, in 1922, she was engaged as an assistant by Professor W. Friedberg, the distinguished Polish malacologist. This appointment opened the first period of her scientific career, which ended in 1932 when she left the University. During that period, she wrote several papers describing various groups of Tertiary and Quaternary fossils of Poland. Her interest in corals increased decisively in 1929 when she visited Dr. S. Smith, the distinguished British coral specialist. A monograph on the Miocene corals from Poland (1932) was the first result of her new field of interest to which she became devotedly attached. Maria

Rózkowska's deep knowledge as well as her openness to new methods are well marked in that paper (still a frequently cited contribution).

In 1932 she abandoned, although unwillingly, her scientific career at the University. She divided her time and warmest feelings between her family and the poorest unemployed. Her good-will and energy in helping the most needy, especially children, made her name famous in the field of philanthropy. Separated from the University, Maria Rózkowska did not relinquish her interest in science. She spent several summers between 1933 and 1939 in Podolia, collecting samples and completing geological and ecological observations at her own expense. Some corals from these collections were described and published in 1946.

The second World War was for Maria Rózkowska and her family a difficult and distressful period. Her husband, a war-time officer, was imprisoned by the Germans until 1945; she was left by herself with three children. Deported from Poznań to a small village in eastern Poland, just at the beginning of the German occupation of her country, Maria Rózkowska worked to support her family and organized an underground school for the children of her village neighbours. Under the pseudonym "Kazimierz" she was also very active as a nurse in the Polish underground army "*Armia Krajowa*".

The years after the war form the second and the most important period in the scientific career of Maria Rózkowska. She returned to Poznań immediately after the war and in the same year (1945) was offered a scientific position at the University. Shortly afterwards (1946) she organized a Laboratory of Paleontology in Poznań, a branch of the Earth Museum in Warsaw, transferred in 1954 to the Polish Academy of Sciences. Professor Rózkowska acted as the head of that Laboratory until 1970 when she retired, from her chair, but not from her scientific activity.

Among 25 published papers of Maria Rózkowska, several were and still are leading papers in rugose corals studies. Works on the Givetian *Phillipsastraeidae* and related groups (1953, 1956, 1957) supplemented by several Frasnian species and genera, described in one of her last papers (1979), form a large contribution to our knowledge of this important coral family of the Polish Devonian. They have influenced studies on this group of corals conducted in other countries.

The study of blastogeny and individual variation (1960) was one of the first papers in this field, introducing new methods and dealing with new areas of coral studies. Professor Rózkowska demonstrated that blastogeny may be as important a generic character as any other, in some cases enabling distinction between otherwise seemingly identical genera. Her studies on inter- and intra-colony variation were among the pioneers for rugosans.

The study on the Famennian tetracorals and heterocorals from Poland completed and published in 1969 by Maria Rózkowska remains the most

comprehensive world achievement in the investigation of this important intermediate fauna. Careful ontogenetic studies, observations of inter-specific variability and exact conodont dating make any comparison of this fauna with new materials and studies easy.

Science, and first of all coral studies were the main passion of Professor Rózkowska. Her last two papers (1979, 1980) are the best indications of that. Being terminally ill with cancer and very weak physically, Maria Rózkowska continued her studies either at home or, when feeling a little stronger, in the Laboratory. It was only for the last three months of her life that she did not visit her office. However, she talked and thought about her studies until the very last weeks. Her scientific and social activities were rewarded with the National Scientific Prize and the Officer's Cross of the "*Polonia Restituta*".

She died on June 20, 1979 in Poznań.

Anyone who met Maria Rózkowska must have been impressed by her unique personality, humanity, and readiness to help. Her deep knowledge and wide understanding in her field of interest coincided closely with her pursuit of perfection. She was always ready to innovate or to try new methods and to spend as much time in completing and correcting data as was necessary for the achievement of the most satisfactory results. Indifferent to her own scientific achievements and position, she was always extremely modest and kind. All of these characteristics made her a great moral example to her students and co-workers, and a remarkable individual to all her foreign visitors.

*Jerzy Fedorowski*

SCIENTIFIC LEGACY OF THE LATE PROFESSOR  
MARIA RÓZKOWSKA

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