

In Memoriam Professor Ewa Stępkowska (1927–2008)

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Owing to her publications in international journals and participation in numerous meetings Professor Ewa Stępkowska was a renowned member of the international community of soil mechanics, clay mineralogy, and thermal analysis scientists. With full of never-failing energy and creative passion, she presented her independent opinions. Till her last days her life was dominated by scientific activities. Her scientific trail led through pharmacy (M.Sc. from the Poznań University in 1948), chemistry (1951), philosophy (1952) at Warsaw University to soil mechanics (doctorate at the Institute of Hydroconstruction in Gdansk in 1960 and habilitation at the Warsaw Technical University in 1970). In 1948, she took up employments in various scientific fields, and finally, in 1954, she concentrated on research related to soil mechanics at the Institute of Hydroconstructions, Polish Academy of Science in Gdańsk, where she worked till her retirement in the 1990s. During her career she went through successive scientific titles—from Assistant to Professor. In her scientific activities she surpassed the conventional scope of soil mechanics conducting interdisciplinary studies bordering on clay mineralogy, physical chemistry, and, above all, thermal analysis.

Professor Ewa Stępkowska cooperated with numerous Polish and foreign scientific centers and took part in many training courses in both Polish and foreign centers, including Hochschule für Verkehrswesen, Dresden (German Democratic Republic), Soil Engineering Laboratory Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA), International Center for Theoretical Physics, Trieste (Italy), and Civil Engineering Department, King's College, London

(Great Britain). She maintained close co-operative links with Instituto Ciencia de Materiales de Sevilla, CSIC, Instituto de Recursos Naturales y Agrobiología, CSIC, Sevilla (Spain), Geological Institute, Warsaw (Poland), Institute of Material Engineering, Geological Enterprise, Warsaw (Poland), and Institute of Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology, Warsaw University (Poland).

She was an active member of scientific associations—ICTAC, AIPEA (Association Internationale pour l'Etude des Argiles) and ISSMFE (International Society for Soil Mechanics and Foundation Engineering) among others.

Professor Stępkowska is the author of 130 original scientific papers and over 50 abstracts and translator into Polish of “Basic Chemical Thermodynamics” by E. Brian Smith published in Poland in 1982 under the title “Podstawy termodynamiki chemicznej” by PWN (State Scientific Publishing Office).

Her scientific achievements won her numerous awards and distinctions.

During the last period of her life, she closely co-operated with Instituto Ciencia de Materiales de Sevilla, CSIC, Instituto de Recursos Naturales y Agrobiología, CSIC, Sevilla in Spain where, during her retirement, she used to spend the winter months. She had the habit to travel by bus and in January 2008 she set off on what proved to be her last journey. She did not make it to Spain. On her way to France, she suffered a stroke, and after several weeks spent in a French hospital she was transferred to Poland.

She died on the 4th of July 2008.

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