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JAROSLAV ŠESTÁK
An appreciation by Joseph H. Flynn

After thirty years of friendship with Dr Jaroslav Šesták, I wish to give a short account of my impressions of him and observations about a few of his many achievements. His interests and outstanding accomplishments cover such broad areas of science, philosophy, art and politics, that, even from this short summary of his life, it will be apparent that he is worthy of the appellation 'Renaissance person'.

Jaroslav Šesták was born in Dr kov, Northern Bohemia on the 25th of September 1938. In 1946, his family moved to Prague. He attended primary and secondary schools, High School of Chemical Technology, the University of Chemical Technology, and culminated his education with a Ph.D. degree conferred in 1967.

In his 1968 Curriculum Vitae which he sent to me, Jaroslav included as his hobbies, basket ball, skiing, painting (graphic) and travelling. One can add to these photographic art and mountain climbing. Much later, his mountain climbing hobby became a profitable profession when he and some of his friends put to use their abilities in cleaning windows of some of the tall buildings in Prague. (The rate of payment was greater than that which he received at the Academy at that time!).

He started his traveling abroad in 1963, and his wanderlust has not ceased since then. It has always been exciting to follow vicariously Jaroslav's exotic travels through his postcards from places like Outer Mongolia and then later to see his artistic and masterful photographs and to hear his fantastic tales of adventure. Samples of his photographic artistry can be seen on many covers of 'ICTAC News'. His combination of travelling and photography culminated in the recent photographic exhibition, 'Globe-Trotting'. It was presented in Prague in February 1998 under the auspices of the Lord Mayor, Rector of the Academy of Fine Arts, President of the Academy of Sciences and the Rector of the Czech Technical University, and was a tremendous success.

By 1968, Jaroslav was a guest worker at AB Atomenergi, Studavik, Sweden and it was at that time that he and I first met at the Second International Conference on Thermal Analysis at Worcester MA, USA. We sat on a bench outside the Lecture Hall and had a lively discussion, as we were each familiar with one another's publications on thermal analysis kinetics. The news of the invasion of Czechoslovakia arrived during the conference. He and Vera state in the Foreword to my 70th Anniversary volume of Thermochimica Acta, which he edited, 'Joe's generous offer for Jaroslav to spend several days in his lovely home full of children in Bethesda helped to overcome Jaroslav's depression and anxiety about whether he would ever be able to come home.'

By the time he returned to Sweden, his decisions had been made. However, the most important and fortunate occurrence of his life took place the following year. I refer to a letter that he sent to us from Sweden on 21 May 1969, concerning his acceptance of a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Missouri at Rolla which concluded, 'I should like

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also to announce my marriage to Miss Vera Zelenkova due to take place on Sunday June 1st, 1969 in a small romanesque church in the Swedish countryside outside Nykoping'.

During their sojourn at Rolla, Vera received her masters degree. She has always been a great support to Jaroslav and contributed greatly to her husband's success. After two years, love of homeland and desire to be near their parents prevailed and they returned to Prague where they still reside. There, in Prague, their daughter, Elizabeth, and son, Paul, were born. Betka is now a beautiful young woman who looks like her mother and Pavel is now a young man, who is even more handsome than his father.

Almost at once, Jaroslav's talents were noted by the scientific community and his abilities and achievements received recognition early. When he was presented the Mettler Award in Thermal Analysis in 1974, he was, by far, the youngest scientist ever to receive it. (I feel that 25 years later I can break the secrecy to mention that the vote of the NATAS Awards Committee was unanimous on the first ballot!) When he received the ICTAC Award at Hatfield 10th ICTAC in 1992, he joined the small select group of scientists (including Robert Mackenzie and Pat Gallagher) who received both of these awards. I won't even bother to list the half a dozen or so other international awards that Jaroslav has garnered over the years. He has just received the highest award of the Czech Academy of Sciences — The Heyrovsksy Medal.

Jaroslav has extended his talents to so many fields: glasses, semiconductors, etc., and is presently exploring the application of traditional models of thermodynamics to the feelings and interactions of human societies. However, as one who has specialized in thermal analysis, I recognize as one of Jaroslav's outstanding achievements, his book, 'Thermal Analysis, Part D, Thermophysical Properties of Solids', which was published in 1984. The depth and breadth of his understanding of the fundamental theories and his ability to apply them to 'practical situations' always amazes me. He also is planning to write a new book on thermodynamics in his spare time, from his position as a senior scientist at the Czech Academy of Sciences and his new position as the Vice-Director of the Institute of Fundamental Studies at Charles University.

The irrepressible enthusiasm which he infuses into his many activities is unbelievable. Even last year, while recovering from a heart operation, he was making plans to engage in serious mountain climbing in the High Tatras after the St. Bretsznajder Conference at Zakopane. (This was at a time that I think he should have had great difficulty climbing up the 'many thousand' steps to his home in Prague.

Jaroslav plans to terminate his political career as a Prague City Councillor, which he has held for the past four years, and to devote his full time to science. He has published 248 scientific articles that have received almost 2000 citations and he has given over 200 invited lectures and seminars around the world and 45 plenary addresses at international conferences. Many of his ideas and concepts have been far too advanced to be yet fully appreciated by the thermal analysis community but we hope to continue to receive them gladly in the years to come.

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