

Chronicle



Associate Professor Leokadia Jarecka, PhD

With the recent 60th anniversary of the beginning of a unique comprehensive parasitological-ecological research conducted by Prof. W.L. Wiśniewski, we would like to recall a figure of one of the main collaborators of this research, Dr. Leokadia (Lena) Jarecka.

Based on documents recovered after the WWII, Lena was born on November 27, 1930 in Kovel (now Ukraine). Her father, Jan Jarecki, was a policeman, her mother Stanisława was a housewife raising her and her brother Ryszard born in 1935.

Lena completed 3rd grade of an elementary school in her hometown, when her education was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. In the second half of September 1939 Soviet troops invaded Kovel. For the Jarecki family it marked the beginning of the ordeal, which affected many people in the Eastern Poland. Her father was arrested, imprisoned in Mednoye (Ukraine) and then killed. Mother and children were deported to Kazakhstan, where the mother died during the journey and the children were sent to different orphanages. Lena and Ryszard were reluctant to talk about that period of their lives, but it is well known how bad life conditions were there. They, however, both emphasized that they had survived only thanks to help of local people who, while overcoming their own harsh living conditions, understood the misery of others and tried to help.

In 1947, thanks to the Polish Union of Patriots, Lena and Ryszard returned to Poland and were placed in the Maryna Falska orphanage in Warsaw. At that time Warsaw high school students helped orphans who returned from the Soviet Union to adapt to a regular school system. As a result, despite

the fact that orphans were usually recommended to enter vocational schools, Dr. Jarecka was accepted in the Limanowski High School of Mathematics and Physics in Warsaw where she received her high school diploma in 1949. In the same year she decided to study biology at the University of Warsaw. Her university admission was supported by a member of the Examination Committee and the then Dean of the Faculty, Prof. Wincenty L. Wiśniewski, who himself survived war camps in the Soviet Union. She graduated in 1954 with a master's degree in zoology.

Her professional career began in 1952 in the Department of Parasitology at the University of Warsaw headed by Prof. Wisniewski, where she started as a junior lecturer. In 1955 she was promoted to a senior lecturer and continued working until 1959. The Department was dissolved after Prof. Wiśniewski died in 1958. In 1959 she was hired in the Department of Parasitology (which in 1980 became the Prof. Witold Stefański Institute of Parasitology) of the Polish Academy of Sciences as an assistant professor, and consequently was promoted to associate professor in 1971 after defending her postdoctoral degree (*habilitacja*). In this position she was employed until 1985.

In the eighties she went to Canada and started collaboration with Prof. M. Burt in the Department of Biology, University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, with whom she worked until her retirement.

Lena Jarecka started her research while still being a student at the University of Warsaw, as a member of a team headed by Prof. Wiśniewski. They investigated the circulation of parasites in the biocenosis of lakes with varying degrees of eutrophication: in 1950–1953 in the lake Drużno (Warmia), in 1954–1955 in the lake Gołdapiwo (Masuria), and in 1956–1958 in the lakes North Mamry and Świącajtę (Masuria). Being a member of the Department (later Institute) of Parasitology at the Polish Academy of Sciences, she followed the line of scientific investigations on several bodies of

water working also in the research station of the Institute in Kleszczewo.

Her research was mainly focused on development cycles, evolution and phylogeny of tapeworms (Cestoda). In 1961 she got her PhD in zoology from the Faculty of Biology, Warsaw University, with a dissertation „Morphological adaptation of tapeworm eggs and their importance in the life cycles.” In 1971 the Scientific Council of the Faculty awarded her with a postdoctoral degree in the field of parasitology for the work under the title „The issues of evolution and phylogeny of Cestoda in the light of ontogenetic development”. While working in Poland she published about 20 papers and scientific reports, she also presented her work at professional conferences in Poland and abroad. In 1970 the Second Division of Biological Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences recognized her research with a scientific award.

Prof. Jarecka's research results, especially her publications on establishing phylogenetic relationships among Cestoda, have been frequently cited by a scientific community in Poland and abroad. She received multiple professional invitations. In 1958 she visited the the Department of Parasitology of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) and the Department of Parasitology in the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague (each time for a month). In 1959 she was invited for a three month visit at the Biological Station in Richelieu in France, in

1962–1964 she visited the Department of Parasitology, at the Medical University of Rennes, France. In 1971 she visited the Department of Parasitology in Louisville (USA), and then the Department of Parasitology at the University of Toronto (Canada).

In addition to research, Lena was also engaged in teaching. While in the Faculty of Biology and Earth Sciences at the University of Warsaw, she taught classes for biology and geology majors, as well as graduate courses in the Department of Parasitology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. In 1970–1980 she run a general biology lab for students in the Department of Biophysics at the University of Warsaw. She directed one PhD student at the Institute of Parasitology, the Polish Academy of Sciences.

While Dr. Jarecka's scientific accomplishments during her work in Poland were remarkable, emigration to Canada slowed down her professional career. Nevertheless, in Canada she has published several papers jointly with Prof. Burt, mainly on aspects of the cercomer theory, whose founder, Prof. Konstanty Janicki, was Polish.

Dr. Jarecka has one daughter, Agnieszka, born in 1964, whom she raised alone. Agnieszka graduated from a dental college and works as a doctor of dentistry in Hamilton (Ontario), where Lena Jarecka also now resides.

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