



Valentin Abramovich Krassilov 1937-2015

#### **From Paleobotanists of Vladivostok**

*Eugenia Bugdaeva, Valentina Markevich, Elena Volynets, Marina Cherepanova, Nadezhda Blokhina*

Institute of Biology and Soil Science FEB RAS, Vladivostok 690022 Russia

**Бугдаева Е.В., Маркевич В.С., Вольнец Е.В., Черепанова М.В., Блохина Н.И. От палеоботаников Владивостока**

Valentin Abramovich Krassilov – a talented paleobotanist, a scientist of world renown, and an intelligent and wonderful person is no longer with us. An appreciation of his extraordinary life is hard to write, particularly as we knew him well and he was a dear friend.

Krassilov became widely known in the scientific community of the 1960s, when he literally burst into the world of paleobotany. His first publications demonstrated immediately that here was an outstanding researcher. VA amazed those around him with his tireless energy, his incredible capacity for work, his ability to describe and explain complex topics with great clarity, and his originality of thinking. He introduced numerous fresh approaches to tackling many problems within the natural sciences. At the age of 27, he defended his PhD thesis on the Early Cretaceous Flora of the Southern Primorye, and two years later his monograph on this topic was published, the content of which has relevance to the present day. He demonstrated an admirable ability for studying in quantity paleobotanical and geological material, as well as a deep knowledge of stratigraphy and paleobotany; something quite revolutionary for that time. For the first time in this subject area VA employed cuticular-epidermal analysis that allowed him to reveal new structural features within the leaves and reproductive organs of fossil plants.

Eight years later, VA defended his higher doctoral thesis entitled “Paleoecology of terrestrial plants and paleoecological method in stratigraphy of continental strata”. At 35, he became one of the youngest in paleontology and stratigraphy to achieve such a doctorate.

Each monograph that VA published introduced novel scientific concepts. The most significant works – “Evolution and biostratigraphy” (1977), “Cretaceous period. The evolution of the earth’s crust and the biosphere” (1985), “The origin and early evolution of flowering plants” (1989), “System Theory of Evolution” (2014) became reference books not only for paleobotanists but for many scientists across a broad range of disciplines. They increased the number of followers and apologists of his ideas.

For many years, VA worked in Vladivostok, first in the Far East Geological Institute, and then in the Institute of Biology and Soil Science of the Far Eastern Scientific Center. In 1971 he organized the Laboratory of Paleobotany – the only one of its kind in the Asian part of USSR. He continued to lead this laboratory until 1990.



Valentin Abramovich and his colleagues from Laboratory of Paleobotany, Institute of Biology and Soil Science FEBRAS, Vladivostok, 2005. Left to right: Elena Volynets, Nadezhda Blokhina, Marina Cherepanova, Valentina Markevich, Valentin Krassilov, Claudia Novikova, Eugenia Bugdaeva



Valentin Abramovich with his colleagues Eugenia Bugdaeva, Dmitry Vassilenko on the field work in the Amur River region, 2005

Krassilov became actively involved in the training of young researchers, passing on his vast experience and knowledge, and showing goodwill and readiness to provide any help that was requested. V.A. could point out new horizons, inspire and captivate those around him with his interesting ideas. He always created favorable conditions for scientific work, and freely exchanged ideas, helped with practical processing of materials, assisted in obtaining results, and so stirred the enthusiasm of those in his lab that they were ready to work tirelessly day and night. VA supervised numerous doctoral research projects and the result of his efforts was the creation of a world-class paleobotanical school in the Russian Far East. In 1983 he became a professor.

VA did not belong to the group of so-called “armchair scientists”. He was a good field worker, working on expeditions, as they say, “from dawn to dusk”, steadfastly enduring personal discomfort, bad weather, and overcoming logistic difficulties. His persistence and enthusiasm usually rewarded him with unique finds of plant fossils. The huge number of samples collected by VA currently forms the basis of the paleobotanical collection of the Institute of Biology and Soil Science FEB RAS.

The results of research conducted by VA are reflected in his numerous papers and monographs published not only in our country but also abroad. Yet the personality of Krassilov the scientist is determined not only by his professional achievements, but perhaps more importantly by his spiritual qualities.

Those of us privileged to have worked with him in Vladivostok were always aware of his sincere attention and constant friendly support, even after his departure, first to Moscow and then to Israel, despite there being many thousands of kilometers between us. We could always ask for advice or consultation on various problems. VA was distinguished by brilliant erudition and open-mindedness. Conversations with him about problems in paleobotany, tectonics, stratigraphy, geology, or the evolution of the biota could gradually move to a discussion of ancient Greek mythology, philosophy, literature, theater and film premieres of new products, or biographies of prominent people. Outwardly VA appeared serious and unsmiling but this was misleading. Within his close circle he was a completely different person: he was the life and soul of the group and he told funny stories. And how creatively he congratulated his colleagues! He might cover a wall with newspapers, draw friendly caricatures, or write humorous poems, always given with warmth, sincerity and with the intention of raising the morale of the laboratory of Paleobotany.

Fate interfered and shortened his lifetime prematurely, breaking great plans. However his life left a bright trail throughout science and our own lives. The wonderful memory of Valentin Abramovich Krassilov, our Teacher, will always remain with us.

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