OBITUARY

Hans J. Hofmann
(1936 – 2010)

‘Hans’ – a name so familiar with each and every palaebiologist who had worked in the Precambrian, is now no more. He died on May 19, 2010 while gardening at his home. The news came as a shock. He will not be seen anymore in all those field meetings which were always made exceptionally exciting by his presence. The strength of this great geologist of our times was not only his superb oratory skills but the power of his writings. His exemplary contributions in the fields of early life and its evolution on our planet, aspects of evolving biosphere through Precambrian and coining the ‘GEON’ Time Scale besides other numerous related fields of geology, biology and physical earth are unparalleled. Hans J. Hofmann proved to be a living legend who had inspired generations that had started working in the fields of Precambrian Life. His meticulously worked out research contributions, passion of applying computers to simulate living systems would keep us reminding in the years to come.

Hans J. Hofmann was Professor Emeritus at the Universite de Montreal, and Adjunct Professor at McGill University and the Redpath Museum in Canada. He had received numerous honours and awards, including Logan Gold Medal in 1958, Billings Medal, Geological Association of Canada (Paleontology Division) in 1980, Willet G. Miller Medal, Royal Society of Canada in 1995, Charles Doolittle Walcott Medal, U.S. National Academy of Sciences in 2002 and was honoured as the Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in the same year. Hans was a zealous worker and an avid traveller. He had travelled to most parts of the world that had Precambrian successions and had traces of past life in it. Hans’s publication list running over 102 papers in almost all the peer reviewed journals with 105 abstracts, reports, field trip guides, etc. is a testimony to the great contribution that had been accomplished by this legend.

Leaving behind his wife Eva, children Wendy, Thomas and Noah, Hans had also left behind his extended family of friends, colleagues, students and admirers. Hans acted like an elder brother to me, occasionally evocative, at times educative and most of the time, like a teacher. He was the first one to come to help when I got hurt in Russia. He provided me his warm clothes during a cruise in Siberia and have been most helping to anybody who needed some kind of help in Namibian desert or Australian Flinder mountains or Yangtze Gorges in China. His couple of visits to India were quite instructive in opening up new emerging fields of Precambrian life in the well renowned Vindhyan basin.

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