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Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Shevyrev (1931–2006)

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On May 13, 2006, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Shevyrev, an outstanding paleontologist and renowned expert in Triassic ammonoids, exceptionally erudite scientist, and skilled editor, died unexpectedly.

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich was born on May 24, 1931, in the town of Lyubertsy (Moscow Region). His father was employed as an engineer at a munitions factory during World War II, and was evacuated with this factory. The family spent the war years in Siberia and the Urals. After the victory, the family, together with the factory, returned to Lyubertsy, where in 1949 Aleksandr Aleksandrovich graduated from a secondary school, with a distinguished merit. Soon after, he was admitted to the Geology Department of Moscow State University. He decided on a career as a geologist when he was in his last year at school. He wrote in his diary:

"All my school teachers, seeing my success in humanities, advised me to study philology or history. But by that time I had already been infected by the virus of geology. I had read a two-volume edition of Melchior Neumayr's *Erdgeschichte* with excellent illustrations. After that I read a book by V.A. Varsanof'eva *Proiskhozdenie i stroenie Zemli* (The Origin and Structure of the Earth). V.A. Obruchev's novels helped to make the final decision and I started at the Geology Department of Moscow State University. During the first year I was inclined to study tectonics, which was involved with the world's cataclysms and the grand processes of mountain formation. All this very much impressed me. However, after the Crimean Geological Field Course I worked for some time in the expedition of V.V. Drushchits collecting specimens for the Museum of Earth Sciences. Drushchits was gradually persuading me to study paleontology, which I resisted for some time. At that time I was under the influence of Huxley's ideas of homotaxial faunas; i.e., faunas of similar stratigraphic position, but still non-synchronous. This idea was based on the assumption that any fauna that once had appeared somewhere on Earth would need some time to spread. In Huxley's opinion,

similar faunal assemblages of western Europe and North America have to be diachronous. This idea strongly undermined my faith in the paleontological method and paleontology. However, Drushchits managed to change my mind, and on my return from the Crimea I seriously decided to study paleontology. Now, at an advanced age, I can say that I have never regretted this choice."

In 1954, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich graduated from Moscow State University with a distinction in paleontology. In the same year he received a job in the Paleontological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, where he worked all his life rising from the position of junior researcher (1954–1970). The last 20 years he was a leading researcher. These bare facts from his career conceal the long and diverse scientific activity of an excellent scientist, who became one of the world's authorities on Triassic ammonoids and biochronology of the marine Triassic. Here we will mention only part of scientific contribution of Aleksandr Aleksandrovich. His first important generalizations concerning fossil cephalopods were based on the material from the Crimea, Caucasus, and Transcaucasia and were published in a monograph entitled *Triassic Ammonoids of the Southern USSR*, for which he received a Ph.D. degree in 1966. In that work he for the first time in our country used the ontogenetic method in the study of ceratites and revised the classification of the group. In 1984 he received a D.Sc. degree for a dissertation in which he summarized the results of his extensive study of Triassic ammonoids, including a wide variety of aspects of their history: from geochronology, systematics, and phylogeny to ecology and biogeography.

This study, supplemented by descriptions of the Triassic ammonoids of the Pamirs, was published as two books *Triasovye ammonoidei* (Triassic Ammonoids) (1986) and *Ammonoidei i khronosratigrafiya triasa* (Triassic Ammonoids and Chronostratigraphy) (1990).

Altogether Aleksandr Aleksandrovich published more than 100 scientific works, including 10 monographs. Apart from the above-mentioned books, other very important books include *Evolution and Change of Marine Organisms at the Paleozoic–Mesozoic Boundary* (1965), *Triassic Ammonites of the Northwestern Caucasus* (1995), and *Atlas of Triassic Invertebrates of the Pamirs* (2001).

As an expert on one of the orthostratigraphic fossil groups, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich could not stay away from biostratigraphic research of the marine Triassic. In this capacity he actively worked in the Triassic Commission of the Interdepartmental Stratigraphic Committee, and in recent years also in the Subcommission of the International Union of Geological Sciences. He participated in the compilation of the stratigraphic schemes for the Triassic of the Northern Caucasus, Transcaucasia, eastern Ciscaucasia, and Mangyshlak.

The editorial work of Aleksandr Aleksandrovich was a very important part of his scientific career. Throughout almost the entire existence of the *Paleontologicheskii Zhurnal* he was its permanent and the best scientific editor. For over 40 years Aleksandr Aleksandrovich was a member of the Editorial Board of the Paleontological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (PIN). More than 100 volumes of *Trudy PIN, Trudy Sovetsko-Mongol'skoi paleontologicheskoi expeditsii* (later *Trudy Rossiisko-Mongol'skoi paleontologicheskoi expeditsii*), and *Trudy Problemnogo Soveta Paleontologicheskogo Instituta* passed through his thorough and attentive editing. Shortly before he died Aleksandr Aleksandrovich completed the editing of a 600-page volume *Evolution of the Biosphere and of Biodiversity.* The quality of editing by Aleksandr Aleksandrovich was second to none. Works that passed it could be published without any doubt. The contribution of Aleksandr Aleksandrovich to the work of *Referativnyi Zhurnal VINITI* is also difficult to overestimate. Over several decades he analyzed and summarized thousands of paleontological and stratigraphic works.

Outside science, the interests of Aleksandr Aleksandrovich were very diverse. These included many fields, particularly literature and history. He was a gifted and remarkable man. Immense modesty and self-restraint, which he showed in a day to day communication, were combined with his sparkling public speeches, in which he stood up for his scientific views. He was positive and honest, remaining a "learned man" in its literal meaning. The dramatic changes of our time, which provoked so much change in people, seemingly did not have any effect on Aleksandr Aleksandrovich. His highest priority was a benevolent service to science, and this remained unchanged throughout his scientific career.

We will always maintain the fondest memories of our friend and colleague.

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