



Karol Sabath (1963–2007)

Karol Sabath was born on 24 July, 1963 in Katowice (the capital of Silesia, the southwest province of Poland). Since his early childhood it was apparent that he was a prodigy with wide intellectual interests, and an unusual ability for accumulating knowledge.

I met Karol for the first time in the spring of 1975. At that time the authorities of the Park of Culture at Chorzów in Silesia approached the Institute of Paleobiology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw with a proposal to create an exhibit in the park. This was to be reconstructions of Cretaceous dinosaurs from the Gobi Desert that had been found by the Polish-Mongolian Paleontological Expeditions. A woody valley in the Zoological Garden, a part of the Park, was appropriate for the exhibition. We accepted the proposal. The plan was that our technical assistant at the Institute, a gifted sculptor Wojciech Skarżyński, would make one tenth scale models of the dinosaurs, which then would be rendered in concrete at natural size by professional sculptors at Chorzów. When we arrived at Chorzów for the first time to inspect the work, the sculptors told us that they had an excellent scientific supervisor who was keen to point out mistakes for them to correct. The “scientist” was a 12 year-old, fair-haired schoolboy, Karol Sabath, who spent all his free time at Dinosaur Valley critiquing the reconstructions. We were very impressed by the knowledge and involvement of the “scientific supervisor”.

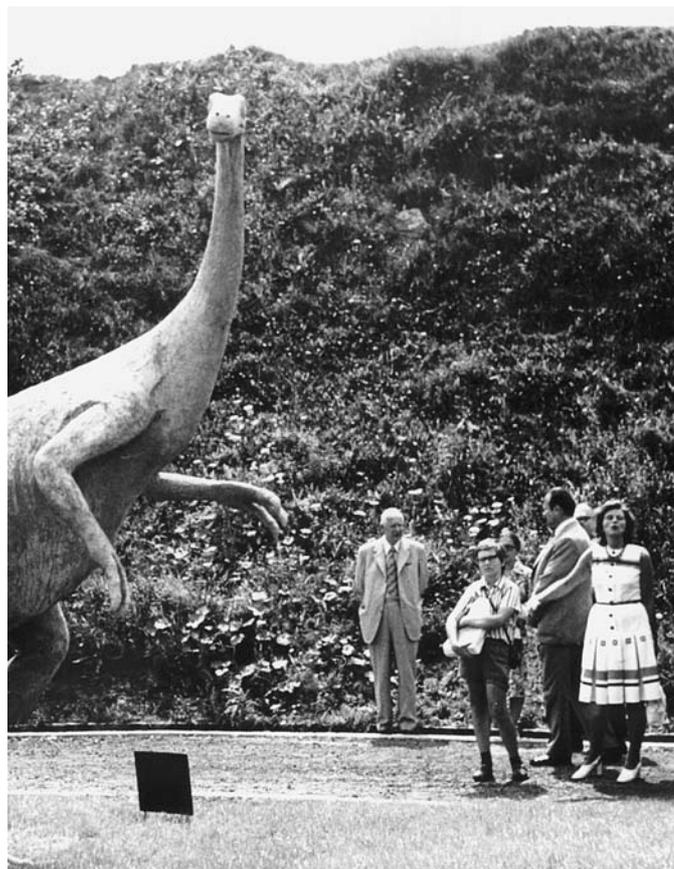
After the exhibition was ready (the dinosaurs stand in the park to this day, still in a good condition) my contact with Karol ceased for several years. In 1981 Karol Sabath started his studies at the Department of Biology and Environmental Protection at the Silesian University at Katowice. At the same time he studied paleontology at the Department of Earth Sciences at the Silesian University at Sosnowiec. In 1986 he graduated from the Silesian University *summa cum laude* and was awarded a Master of Sciences degree.

In 1986 I read in *Problemy* (a Polish popular science monthly) a brilliant article on current problems in systematic zoology by Karol Sabath. I invited Karol to visit our Institute and I introduced him to colleagues working on vertebrates. They all were impressed by his knowledge of paleontology and general issues in biology. It was during this visit that we offered Karol a position of research assistant. Subsequently he became a senior research assistant, senior research specialist, and finally the curator of exhibits at the Museum of Evolution, which is part of the Institute of Paleobiology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Karol Sabath was a man of many talents. Already as a young boy he was fluent in at least four foreign languages. He

translated several books into Polish, and was a co-author of several textbooks of biology for schools. For several years he was active as a representative of the Institute of Paleobiology during the “Festivals of Sciences” and “Scientific Picnics” organized in Warsaw.

His main scientific interests were dinosaurs and dinosaur eggs, on which he published several professional papers, often in collaboration with specialists from other countries. He was deeply engaged in the controversy between creationism and evolution, and he was one of the most active adversaries of so-called “intelligent design”. He defended Darwinism even in the lion’s den by writing an article for an American creationist-minded quarterly. Together with his companion Katarzyna Adamala they created a high quality webpage www.ewolucja.org dealing with new discoveries on paleontology and with the evolution-creationism debate. He was an



Twelve-year-old Karol Sabath with Zofia Kielan-Jaworowska at the opening of “Dinosaur Valley” in the Park of Culture at Chorzów, Silesia, summer 1975. Photo: Archive of the Institute of Paleobiology.



Karol Sabath at the exhibit in the Museum of Evolution, of the Institute of Paleobiology, in the Warsaw Palace of Culture, near the cast of the skull of *Tarbosaurus bataar*. Photo: Albert Zawada, August 2003.

active member of the Committee of Evolutionary and Theoretical Biology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Because of his literary skills and editorial eye, he was for many years an irreplaceable member of the editorial staff of *Acta Palaeontologica Polonica*. Karol also cooperated with the editors of *Świat Nauki* (Polish edition of *Scientific American*) and *National Geographic, Polska*.

Karol Sabath was also a gifted artist and illustrator of various paleontological books. One of his passions was scientific exhibitions. He was the curator and scientific contributor to several exhibits of the Museum of Evolution of the Institute of Paleobiology. In 2001 when he accepted a part time

position as research specialist in the Geological Museum of the Polish Geological Institute in Warsaw, he became the curator and contributor to several exhibits organized by that Museum. He also contributed to exhibits in the Silesian Museum in Katowice, as well as to several other museums.

Karol's unusual sense of humor and his kindness, especially to younger colleagues, made him very popular among his colleagues at the Institute of Paleobiology, at the Polish Geological Institute, and at all other places with which he collaborated. He will be missed by paleontologists and evolutionists in Poland and abroad, and by those who knew and loved him.

Zofia Kielan-Jaworowska [zkielan@twarda.pan.pl], professor emeritus at the Institute of Paleobiology, Polish Academy of Sciences, ul. Twarda 51/55, PL-00-818 Warszawa, Poland.