



## **Jubilee of Professor STEPAN FODOR**

**(in commemoration of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary)**

In November, 1997 a great jubilee is commemorated. STEPAN FODOR, one of the oldest Ukrainian botanists, well-known investigator of Transcarpathian vegetation, Doctor of Biological Sciences and Professor of Uzhgorod State University is ninety. A former student of A. MARGITAI, K. DOMIN, O. LIPA has performed great service to his country in investigations of its flora. Being a scientist, he prepared the first general monographic survey called "Flora of Transcarpathia" (Lviv: Vyshcha Shkola, 1977. - 206pp.) based on his study of nature for many years. As a teacher, for more than 50 years of his academic work he has taught a great number of students and has trained several generations of botanists - may they be scientists, teachers, foresters or dendrologists, all of them continue their teacher's work in their particular fields. His name is well-known to researchers of Carpathians. Due to his herbarium collections and scientific work, Prof. S. FODOR is often referred to in fundamental monographs such as "Flora of the European Part of the USSR" (St.-Peterburg, 1974-1996), "Determination Key for Plants of the Ukrainian Carpathians" (Kiev, 1974), "Red Data Book of the USSR" vol. 2 (Moscow, 1984) and other numerous home and foreign botanical publications.



The Fodor's family is known for having a close relation to the nature lasting through several generations. Thus, grandfather of S. FODOR was a forester and hunter in Count Schönborn-Buchgeim's estate. He did his work with love and care and always looked after rational use of forest and its renewal. Father of S. FODOR, was an excellent teacher and educator of his pupils. He also was in the post of a local unit secretary of the Agrarian party and local people remember him well for he has planted and grown numerous orchards. Stepan Fodor is very famous among botanists not only in Ukraine, but also in Russia, Hungary, Slovakia, Czechia and other countries. He became famous for his scientific studies in the fields of classical botanical subjects - floristics, systematics, botanical geography, dendrology, silviculture, history of botany, in herbarium compiling, and for his excellent teaching abilities. S. FODOR's son, Doctor of biological sciences, and expert in genetics, has studied the most problems in this field at the leading universities in Ukraine, in Russia, in Hungary and now in the USA.

STEPAN FODOR was born on November 2, 1907 in the village of Nizhnya Hrabovnitza, Beregi comitat, Austria-Hungary (now Nizhnya Hrabovnitza, Svalyava district, Transcarpathian region) in a family of teacher. His mother, Anna Kirschbaum (1887-1958) gave birth to four children - two daughters and two sons. His father, STEPAN FODOR Sr. (1877-1948) was a teacher and school master, and taught children love for nature.

Surrounded by the picturesque nature of piedmont belt, STEPAN FODOR spent his childhood in his native village. There he attended a primary school. After finishing the primary school, STEPAN FODOR was admitted to the local grammar school, named after Drugets in Mukachevo. This was a special period in his life. Student S. FODOR decided to devote his future career for the work of naturalist. He recollects his student years with pleasure, and his memories are related especially to one of his professors, teacher in chemistry A. MARGITAI. A. MARGITAI was well-known researcher of flora of Transcarpathia and used to go with his pupils out to the nature, showing *natura rerum* to them. He thought them how love to plants and nature. Prof. S. FODOR remembers that the students often gave the bouquette with field or forest flowers to their teacher in order to keep his good mood when he tested them in chemistry. In last year of his studies, S. FODOR met Prof. K. DOMIN from Charles University in Prague, who recommended him a subject for his scientific work. Perhaps, there and then the decision on the further carrer of S. FODOR was made. After succesful passing his exams, S. FODOR was admitted to Charles University in Prague. He concentrated on geography and biology (botanics). At the Faculty of Science he studied plant systematics under the supervision of prof. K. DOMIN and with collaboration with lecturers M. DEYL and P. SILLINGER, whom he often accompanied when going out to nature. His teacher in geology was prof. F. KETNER and prof. SLAVÍK thought him mineralogy.

During the period of his studies at the University (1926-1931) he studied over 130 general and special subjects, and at his final year he wrote a disertation on "Vegetation of the Hungarian plain (Alföld)". In this which he specifically described the well-known Chorny Mochar (Szernye Mocsár) with occurrence of some interesting plant species, e.g. *Comarum palustre* L., *Andromeda polifolia* L., *Drosera anglica* HUDS., *Epilobium*



*gracile* KOCH., *Carex limosa* L., etc. These plants used to grow there and unfortunately had disappeared from this area by now.

After his graduation, S. FODOR came back to Transcarpathia. Between 1931-1941 he worked in Uzhgorod at a Rusyn (Ukrainian) grammar school and later at a Hungarian grammar school for girls. He taught natural history and botany. The Second World War made S. FODOR to interrupt his pedagogical work.

After the war, in 1945 S. FODOR came back to Uzhgorod to continue his work. In 1947 he started to work at a newly established university. First of all he worked in its Botanical Garden, later on he took a post of lecturer at the Department of Plant Morphology and Systematics and finally the post of professor. In 1966 he submitted his thesis for his PhD on "Transcarpathian Arboreal Flora and Ways of its Enrichment". In 1973 he was awarded at Lomonosov University in Moscow for his thesis on "Transcarpathian Flora and its Potential Use in the National Economy".

For more than 50 years of his work at Uzhgorod University S. FODOR closely combined his teaching, which he considered to be his main vocation, with his research work. He wrote a number of lectures on flowering plant systematics and on local flora.

The herbarium which S. FODOR made was probably the connecting link between his teaching and research activities. Prof. S. FODOR collected plants, then he made herbaria and carefully identified all the plants. As a herbarium curator, he was constantly enriching his collections, he paid attention to the proper storage of plants and to good condition of his equipment. At present, the Herbarium of Uzhgorod University (UU) contains 267 thousand herbarium sheets and is one of those recognized all around the country and it is constantly used by researchers. Prof. S. FODOR, even if already retired, is still in post of the curator.

S. FODOR started his long research in Transcarpathian flora in 1947. He studied home and foreign literature, especially works of the first researchers of the region: P. KITABEL, L. WAGNER, F. PAX, A MARGITAI, K. DOMIN, M. DEYL, S. JÁVORKA, S. KULZYNSKI and others, and critically processed herbarium collections; PRC, BP, KW, MW, LW, etc. He also collected plants from various areas of Transcarpathia, analysed a huge volume of floristic material. As a result of his vegetation investigation he published a lot of papers such as "Material to Transcarpathian Flora" (1951, 1954), "Studies on plants introduced to Transcarpathia" (1951), "Vegetation of the Transcarpathian Region" (1954), "Plant Cover of the Transcarpathian Region" (1956), "Mountain and Highland Meadows of North-West Part of Transcarpathia" (1957), etc. Finally, he wrote his most important work called "Flora of Transcarpathia". In this work he gives information on biology, distribution, ecology of 2613 species of aboriginal and cultural flora of the region, and also gives reports on some adventitious and introduced plants including notes of their native land, time of discovery or introduction.

During many years of work in the field of "Urban green architecture", S. FODOR collected a lot of information on history of parks, public gardens and arboreta of Transcarpathia, including information on their original plants and their place in the greenery of towns and villages. He also developed the principles of greenbelt setting. In cooperation with his colleagues V. TERLETSKY and Ya. GLADUN he published two books



- "Plants introduced to the Carpathians" (1982), and "Botanical Treasury of the Carpathians" (1985).

S. Fodor's research work related to a problem of the upper forest boundary regeneration in the Ukrainian Carpathians is of great importance. For the results he spent more than 30 years working on this subject in Rivna and Breskul Poloninas and he was awarded the Medal of the USSR State Committee for Sciences and Technology in 1984 for his findings.

Prof. S. FODOR has always combined his teaching and research work with his public activity. He was a Head of Uzhgorod Branch of Moscow Society of Naturalists and now he is a member of the Ukrainian Botanical Society. For a long time he has actively worked with the Regional and Town Societies for Nature Protection. He was the editor of several books, he used to participate editing the "Tiscia" (Szeged), a periodical published by the International Committee for the Tisza River.

This great man is still full of strength and energy. He often visits the Department of Botany of Uzhgorod University, gives advice to students and post-graduates, and receives his friends, colleagues and his students at his pleasant home. They enjoy his company and very much they like his recollections on various stories from the busy, but very interesting life of this experienced man.

Our dear teacher, your grateful disciples wish you the best in your Anniversary. Mnogaya lit, blagaya lit!

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