



IN MEMORIAM

ANDREJ KRANJC
(1943-2023)



(Photo: S. Jeršič)

It is with heavy hearts that we pay tribute to the remarkable life and contributions of academician Andrej Kranjc, a visionary geographer, karstologist, long-time editor of *Acta Carsologica*, our colleague and friend. On January 7th 2023, Andrej left us in his eightieth year, leaving an indelible mark on Slovenian karstology.

Andrej's passion for caving was awakened as a high school student. His journey into caves and karst research began in 1965, as a student of geography and archaeology, he helped organise the International Speleological Congress. This brought him into contact with the researchers at the Karst Research Institute in Postojna and eventually led to him becoming their co-worker. Throughout his academic career, he was guided and inspired by academician Ivan Gams. Andrej's expertise spanned the entire range of karstology and included speleology, geomorphology, hydrology, terminology and the history of karst research, which he continued to deal with after his retirement.

In 1977 he obtained the master's degree with a thesis on the karst area of Dolenjska. He determined the stages of karst and cave development depending on the direction and type of water drainage. In 1987, he received his

PhD with a study on the transport of allogenic sediments in the Kras aquifer, and the determination of the origin and role of fluvial sediments in speleogenesis. Similar studies had already been carried out abroad, but in Slovenia this type of work was considered ground-breaking and formed the basis for later studies on speleogenesis and cave sediments.

Andrej also dealt with flooding in karst areas, especially in Kočevje Polje, Cerknica Polje and along the rivers Reka and Pivka. In these studies he discusses the flooding mechanism and the hydrological and pedological characteristics of the areas. The work has been useful for many other researches related to the effects of floods on the life and activities of the population, to regulation and melioration measures, and to the evaluation of the damages caused by floods.

In addition, Andrej published several regional speleological and karstological studies at home and abroad. Initially studies of individual caves resulted from his work on the Basic speleological map of Slovenia. He later paid special attention to ecological issues, the vulnerability and preservation of karst, and the use of its resources. He devoted himself to the Škocjan Caves and their pro-



*In a salt cave on Qeshm Island, Iran
(Photo: F. Gabrovšek)*

tection, the history of karst research and the development of karstology. In particular, he studied the works of Valvasor, Hacquet, Martel and others.

Andrej remained a researcher at the Karst Research Institute ZRC SAZU until his retirement in 2010. For eight years, between 1988 and 1995, he was the Institute's head. Together with his wife Maja, who managed the institute's library with tireless dedication, they were the heart of the institute. Early in his tenure at the Institute, in 1972, Andrej established contacts with prominent French karstologists who introduced him to new research approaches. These connections developed into lifelong friendships and collaborations. Andrej's sphere of influence expanded worldwide as he established connections with leading karstologists around the world. Through these connections, many of them visited Postojna and became prominent ambassadors for the Slovenian Karst and the Institute.

Andrej's adventurous spirit went beyond borders, as he explored karst landscapes on all inhabited continents. He was aware that karst cannot be learned from literature alone, but must be seen and experienced in nature. His travels were more than mere journeys, they were living encounters with the world. Andrej's inexhaustible enthusiasm and energy during these journeys were an inspiration to all who accompanied him.

Andrej was editor-in-chief of *Acta Carsologica* for seventeen years (1993 – 2010), when the journal gained international recognition. It was included in many international databases, including SCI, and became the world's leading karstological journal, providing karst enthusiasts with an international platform for presenting

results of multidisciplinary research. In addition, Andrej was editor-in-chief (1991–1993) of the central Slovenian geographical journal *Geographical Bulletin* (*Geografski vestnik*) and a member of the editorial boards of numerous domestic and foreign journals. He was also co-author and editor of several other monographs.

Among Andrej's legacies were the pioneering efforts to establish a doctoral programme in karstology. This venture, launched at the Faculty of Humanities in Koper and later at the University of Nova Gorica, has gained international recognition and became a UNESCO education chair. The programme has already produced nearly thirty PhD students from all over the world. Andrej's administrative leadership and substantive contributions were crucial in shaping this initiative and earned him the title of Professor Emeritus at the University of Nova Gorica.

Andrej was a dedicated mentor to both students and colleagues, providing them with open-hearted and unwavering support on their academic and personal journeys. He supervised a number of theses and six dissertations by doctoral students from around the world.

On the joint initiative of the Karst Research Institute headed by Andrej and the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO, the Institute organised the first International Karstological School in 1993. This event has since become the most important annual gathering of karst scientists, celebrating its thirtieth anniversary this year.

Throughout his illustrious career, Andrej has held numerous roles in different councils, expert groups, project coordination, which benefited from his extensive ex-

pertise, reliability and gentle leadership style. Andrej has received several awards for his achievements, including the Prešeren Prize for Students and the Golden Plaque, as well as the Anton Melik Prize of the Association of Slovenian Geographers, to name a few.

We bid farewell to a mentor, colleague and friend of profound wisdom and boundless compassion. He exemplified a rare breed of people who not only imparted

knowledge but also ignited a passion for learning in the younger generation. Andrej's legacy is interwoven with those closest to him — his wife Maja and son. We offer them our deepest condolences on the loss of husband and father.

Franci Gabrovšek and Nataša Ravbar