

Docent dr. habil. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Barbara Skierska (1928—1978)

Docent Barbara Skierska was born in Siemienice near Kutno, Poland. After graduating from grammar school, in 1946, she began studies at the "Mikolaj Kopernik" University, Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, in Toruń, being awarded the degree of "Magister" of Philosophy in zoology and comparative anatomy in 1952.



In August 1952 she commenced her professional employment in the Medical Entomology Laboratory at the Institute of Maritime and Tropical Medicine in Gdynia, headed by Professor Jadwiga Lachmajer. Doc. Skierska was connected with this Laboratory to the very end. It was here also that she passed through all the stages of her scientific career — from assistant to assistant professor. She was appointed head of the Medical Entomology Laboratory in 1973 and from January 1978 also of the Department of Parasitology.

Doc. Skierska was interested in many fields of medical acaroenomology and worked on various groups of arthropods, but her main interest was concentrated on Diptera, particularly to Culicinae and Ceratopogonidae. Her faunistic studies helped to extend the knowledge of Polish fauna with several new species of these insects.

In 1962, Doc. Skierska was awarded her first doctor's degree by the University of Toruń, Department of Biology and Earth Sciences, for her thesis entitled "Ecological studies on the occurrence and distribution of Culicidae fauna in the coastal forest belt".

She was awarded her second degree (Dr. habil.) in 1973 for her dissertation entitled "Faunistic-ecological investigations on blood-sucking midges (Diptera, Ceratopogonidae = Heleidae), of the Polish coast".

In the field of medical entomology, Doc. Skierska underwent specialized training in the U.S.S.R., in the Martsinovskiy Institute of Medical Parasitology and Tropical Medicine in Moscow, as well as in the Zoological Institute of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Leningrad. During the academic years 1965/1966 she was employed as an assistant in the Department of Parasitology and Applied Zoology, Medical and Pharmacy Faculty in Rennes, later undergoing one month's training in haematophagous Ceratopogonidae at the Institute of Parasitology of the Medical Faculty at the Louis Pasteur University in Strasbourg. In 1977, she passed a 14 days' course on the biological control of harmful arthropods in the Laboratory of Insect Pathology of the Institute of Entomology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, in Prague.

During the 26 years she was employed at the Institute of Maritime and Tropical Medicine in Gdynia, Docent Skierska's achievements included over 70 papers. These are an illustration of her diligence which was based on a deep sense of duty and responsibility towards science. Her papers were highly appreciated by other specialists. The keys to the determination of larvae, pupae and adult forms of Culicidae are of substantial scientific as well as practical value. Her last, unfinished work was a monograph on "Culicidae".

Docent Skierska played an active part in the work of many scientific societies, in particular the Polish Parasitological Society and the Polish Entomological Society. She was also a member of the Arachnoentomological Commission of the Polish Parasitological Society and of the Group of Specialists on Culicidae and Ceratopogonidae of the Polish Entomological Society. Docent Skierska actively participated in many scientific congresses, symposia, and meetings. To the end of her life she was an active scientist.

Docent Barbara Skierska died prematurely on 13th July 1978 and Polish parasitology lost a devoted and reliable scientist and outstanding entomologist.

Assoc. Prof. Z. Wegner