



## Obituary

# Peter Komadel, 1955–2021

Joseph W. Stucki and Jana Madejová

The passing of Peter Komadel on 27 February 2021, in Bratislava, Slovakia, was a great loss to the clay science community. His infectious personality delighted all who knew him, and his enthusiasm for scientific enquiry inspired friends and colleagues around the world. These attributes enabled him in 1985 to leave Eastern Europe to become a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. This launched him on an international journey that accelerated to full speed soon after October 1989 when travel restrictions from his home country were lifted. One could rightly declare that his travels were so extensive that he could circle the globe and meet friends at every stop. He truly loved his work, constantly sought new opportunities for collaboration and was a loyal colleague to all. At home, he loved his wife and two sons and never missed an opportunity to attend to their interests. He also cared for his mother and other ageing relatives.

Peter was born on 18 March 1955 in Bratislava to Ludovít and Anna Komadel. Both of his parents were medical doctors. His father achieved national and international recognition as an Olympic swimmer, served as a medical advisor to the Czechoslovak Olympic Team and was a leader in sports medicine. Peter was also an expert swimmer and taught swimming lessons from time to time.

In 1983, he married Ludmila (Ludka) Šovčíková and they had two sons, Daniel and Ján, both of whom have excelled in their educational and professional pursuits. Sadly, Ludka passed away in 2016. Just days after Peter's passing, his mother passed away also. He is survived by his sons, his father and two sisters.

Peter received a PhD degree in 1984 from the Department of Physical Chemistry, Comenius University, Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, and in 1998 was awarded the Doctor of Science (DrSc) by the Institute of Inorganic Chemistry (IIC), Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS), Bratislava. His DrSc thesis was entitled 'Chemical modification of fine fractions of bentonites'. From 1982 to 2018, he was employed as a research associate at the IIC SAS in the Department of Hydrosilicates, where he was promoted successively to researcher and senior researcher. From 1993 to 2018, he served as Head of the Department of Hydrosilicates, and during 2000–2009, he also served as Deputy Director of IIC SAS. From 1991 to 2014, he was a member of the Scientific Board of SAS and was its Head from 2002 to 2014.

His international positions included three stints at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign as a research associate, adjunct professor and Fulbright Scholar. He also spent time at the Centre for Instrumental and Developmental Chemistry, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, and as a visiting academic at Commonwealth Scientific and



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Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Land and Water, Glen Osmond, Australia.

He was a prolific scientist and a leader in clay science throughout the world. He published >100 peer-reviewed articles, two patents and seven book chapters and gave >80 invited lectures and seminars. His main areas of interest were the characterization and chemical modification of smectites, including the characterization of the main minerals and admixtures present in the fine fraction of bentonites; layer-charge modification via Fe(III) to Fe(II) reduction or via fixation of small cations (e.g. Li) upon heating; acid activation; interactions with organic cations; the (in)stability and properties of H-smectites; catalytic activity; and swelling and water-sorption properties.

Peter was well known in and gave much service to his professional societies. He served as President of The Clay Minerals Society (CMS) from 2012 to 2013, during which time he presided at the 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting of CMS. He was President of the Slovak National Clay Group, President of the European Clay Groups Association (ECGA), a member of the Council of Association Internationale pour l'Étude des Argiles (AIPEA) and a member of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland. He was instrumental in the founding and organization of the Mid-European Clay Conferences, and he was a long-time associate editor for *Clays and Clay Minerals*, *Clay Minerals*, *Applied Clay Science* and *Geologica Carpathica*.

Peter was the second George Brown Lecturer (of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland); he received

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the Marion L. and Chrystie M. Jackson Mid-Career Clay Scientist Award (of CMS); he was a three-time winner of the 'Premium of the Slovak Literary Foundation for a Scientific Echo in last 3 years'; and he received the Honorary Plaque of Dionýz Štúr for Achievements in Natural Sciences and the Medal of the Slovak

Academy of Sciences for Support of Science. He also received a number of team awards from the SAS.

As his friends and colleagues, we bid Peter the warmest and most heartfelt farewell. While we now miss him, we will see his smile whenever we think of him, and we know his legacy will endure.