PERSONAL PROFILE

Anders Martinsson of Sweden

Logo of the International
Commission on Stratigraphy

Anders Martinsson, the present Chairman of the International Commission on Stratigraphy, has served IUGS since 1965, in many different capacities. He began as Chairman of the Committee on Printing and Publication of Papers, continuing in this position when it became the Advisory Board on Publications in 1968. His association with ABP until 1978 covered the period when many of the current publication policies and directions were established, as outlined in the Editorial to this issue.

Prof. Martinsson has also a long and close association with the International Geological Correlation Programme since its early planning stages in 1967. He was the rapporteur in Budapest in 1969, when the scientific programme was laid out as a cooperative enterprise with Unesco, and he served as chairman of IGCP Scientific Committee No. 1 from 1974 to 1980. One of two Counselors to the Programme, Prof. Martinsson is unique in having an unbroken record of attendance at all IGCP Board Meetings.

Anders Martinsson was born at Borgholm on lower Middle Cambrian of the Baltic Isle of Öland. He likes to contrast the extreme geographical narrowness of his formal educational and employment career to the wide field he has worked in as a scientist and in international service. He received all the equivalents of a B.Sc. (1953), M.Sc. (1955), Ph.D. (1956) and D.Sc. (1962) from the University of Uppsala, where he has been employed in different teaching and research positions since 1955.

The only break from Uppsala came in 1969 and 1970 when he was pulled between Oregon State University and the University of Tübingen, before ending up in Uppsala again as Head of the small Department of Palaeobiology with a handful of dedicated collaborators. Prof. Martinsson admits freely that it was mainly because of the narrowness of this base that he became involved in IUGS and IGCP as well as in the experiment since 1968 to drive *Lethaia*, a leading journal in his field, as a kind of international seminar to compensate for a larger circle of doctoral students.

The editorship of *Lethaia* has been linked with a programme for reforming the structure of scientific editing. In his view, the scientific editor should acquire a considerable professionalism in order to unite creatively substance with modern forms of presentation. The editor should be well versed in

the techniques of the information process, from the printer to the publisher, bookseller, librarian, documentalist to the reader and the next writer.

Anders Martinsson played a major role in organizing for IUGS and Unesco continent-wide associations of scientific editors: Editerra (now EASE) for Europe, founded in Paris (1968); Alegeo for Latin America, founded in Caracas (1973), and Editeast for the East Pacific region, founded in Bandung (1975). He was President of Editerra from 1972 to 1975 and a founder of the International Federation of Scientific Editors' Associations (IFSEA) of whose Board he is still a member.

Originally a biologist, Anders Martinsson found some of his favourite topics in fossil material, such as the ontogeny and development of sexual dimorphism in palaeoecological ostracodes or the ecological implications of trace fossils. These topics took him to Silurian and Cambrian rocks in widely different parts of the world. His ideas have been much influenced by a brief period (1958-1960) as a petroleum geologist involved in basin analyses of the Mesozoic of Portugal, based largely on reflection seismics. This work led him to the realization that the rock bodies represented by different palaeoecosystems formed closely similar basin patterns. He believes that ecostratigraphy provides a more true and accurate picture of time and space relationships, in slight contrast to the ever-practical zonal stratigraphy. He admits however that he has preached rather than published along these lines. His mapping in 1958 of the submarine Palaeozoic of the Baltic has successfully withstood later revisions, despite the location in its middle of the reefy Silurian Isle of Gotland, a favourite spot for detailed palaeobiological-ecostratigraphical studies (see article by Laufeld and Bassett, EPISODES, 1981/2, p. 23-27).

Since 1976 Anders Martinsson has been the Chairman of the International Commission on Stratigraphy, the largest scientific body within the IUGS with 32 separate working units involving over 1200 scientists from around the world. The Commission is the exclusive authority for standardizing stratigraphical boundaries and units of international importance. Its roots extend back to the 1878 International Geological Congress in Paris, and it operated independently for many years before being accepted in 1965 as a Commission of the IUGS.

The standardization of boundaries to be put on maps and used in correlation may seem to be a highly administrative affair, but in practice it is the "vivid base work" in the field that entirely dominates Commission activities. Traditionally, the working units of the Commission retain a considerable autonomy with regard to their constitution and activities. The latter have increased considerably in recent years since a number of IGCP projects have been organized as supporting projects to the Commission.

Prof. Martinsson confesses that as a scientist he likes most these side and spin-off activities in the Commission. At the same time he is impatient to see the formal results coming in, for example, submissions of proposed major boundary stratotypes. There is certainly a growing pressure for an authoritative, modern World Chronostratigraphic Scale, but not even the major units of it are standardized as yet. However, he expects a great number of proposals for system boundaries to be submitted in 1984. The Commission is also cautiously tackling the problem of the larger units, the eons and the eras, where agreement on concepts seems to be easy

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but where there are important snags in nomenclature, particularly when stepping a little outside English-speaking areas.

It is not always easy to keep stratigraphical standardization within objective science, Prof. Martinsson notes with critical amusement. National and local groups of biostratigraphers are always keen to "capture stratotypes". He is also critical of the lingering (and stubborn!) trend to select stratotypes in sediments far away from ancient shores and with impoverished mainly pelagic biota. Stratigraphers are less frightened, he says, of undetectable gaps of thousands of years in these basinal realms than of dramatic and obvious one-week events closer to the coast where both physical and biological events are abundantly evident in great diversity.

When asked for anecdotes, Anders Martinsson says that he has plenty but that his editorial "space-mindedness" prevents him from telling them. He will admit though that he was one of those geologists isolated in the snow in Kashmir during the 1964 International Geological Congress, that he could not have had a more eminent position to observe the invasion of Prague during the 1968 Congress, and that when Tibet was opened to scientific visitors in 1980, he was there. Among his more general likings are violent thunderstorms, coastal steamers and all facets of the lovely nature of the Baltic islands.

A Postscript

One example of Anders Martinsson's interest in the IUGS concerns archiving. For some years the Union has had a policy, though not always followed, whereby the documents of its constituent bodies which are not needed for current work or regular reference should be deposited in an archive open to appropriate users. Stored in this way should be not only circulars, annual and scientific reports and financial accounts, but also the correspondence of IUGS officers. This material reveals much of the story of how initiatives were born and how ideas developed, information that may be of interest to historians of science, and that is otherwise often lost or destroyed upon the retirement or death of the officers concerned.

Professor Martinsson, together with Dr. M.G. Bassett, the Secretary-General of the Commission on Stratigraphy, has put much effort into assembling a voluminous collection of commission archives up to 1980 with only one gap (1968 to 1972), which is expected to be filled eventually by a collection to be stored elsewhere. He informs EPISODES that this collection is now housed in the Manuscript Division of the University Library in Uppsala (Box 510, S-751 20 Uppsala, Sweden – Shelf No. 618A-B).