

Obituary

Andrzej Ziemilski 1923-2003.

05/2003



It sounds bitter, but Ernest Skalski is right when he writes about us as a "passing away generation." On April 29, 2003, our friend Jan Andrzej Ziemilski, a sociologist by education and profession, a skier, mountaineer, kayaker and mountain hiker by avocation, and a writer, essayist, and journalist by passion, died suddenly at the age of 80.

As written in one of his obituaries: a great erudite person from the difficult borderland between humanities and sports. Born in Lviv on June 17, 1923, he climbed for a short time, although he has several new routes and variants to his credit: on the Little Iceberg (the whole of the so-called Kulczynski Pillar, with Jan Strzelecki 1949), on the Mnich (with Maciej Robakiewicz 1950), on the Frog Monk (with Jan Strzelecki 1950). He mainly went to the Alps for skiing - with descents of the ski-alpinisme type. He was admitted to KW in the autumn of 1948 on the recommendation of Bronisław Fink and Tadeusz Orłowski and received ordinary membership in August 1949. He was active in the KW Warsaw Circle, participated, among other things, in the meeting on the Chocholowska Glade (1954), and was co-host of the UIAA Congress in Zakopane (1971). He had deeper ties with skiing, he was one of the oldest instructors of PZN, he received the degree of trainer in 1952.

The topic of his doctoral thesis was: "Stations of winter sports in Alpine countries", together with G. Młodzikowski he created the book "Skiing. An encyclopedic outline" (1957). He was the main advocate of a "second Zakopane" on Śnieżnik in the Kłodzko Basin ("I once invented Śnieżnik," he wrote, to help Zakopane).

In the summer of 1963, he conducted a memorable "sociological reconnaissance" in the Tatra Mountains ("Wierchy" 1964 pp. 51-76). He published numerous books, almost all of them hooked on the mountains, which were something exceptionally important to him. In his short stories and essays he referred to "his own and other people's" experiences, he fictionalized them, however, and today it is difficult to separate facts from writerly fantasy. Recalling the years of war and conspiracy, he talked about his ties with the Warsaw "Parasol" and the little-known Poronian "Ciupaga." His "Pillar of the Delicious Peak" (1959) was an important item in the mountaineering library of the time. He translated books and wrote commentaries for films, including Sprudin's "Zamarła Turnia."

In his scientific and literary work, he was interested in man's relationship with the earth and nature. His dissertation "Man and Mountains and Modern Civilization" (1975), and more broadly, his book "Man in the Landscape" (1976), speak of this. He rightly attributed to the mountains an important role in shaping the personality of young people.

Despite almost 80 years of age and the onset of Parkinson's disease, he remained in good shape until his last days: he published his accurate columns, in the summer of 2001, on behalf of TPN, he conducted a second "sociological reconnaissance" in the Hala region - again together with Andrzej Marchlewski. He was working on another book on mountains and sports, and one of the chapters was the April 1957 airplane accident over Geneva, in which a participant in the club's trip to the Alps, Ewa Dewitz, died. On that trip Andrew was the deputy manager.

A week before his surprise death, he had been skiing on Kasprowy, and had also visited Bialka Tatrzańska and the family ski center there. On April 8, he participated in a meeting with Leszek Cichy and Janusz Kurczab, after which he said with regret that he had never been to Nepal, but after this show he got the urge to "jump out" there. A great storyteller and soul of the company, he had a multitude of friends. His passing was noted by leading dailies: in Gazeta Wyborcza he was farewelled by Ernest Skalski, in Rzeczpospolita by Stefan Bratkowski. The funeral on May 8 at the pine cemetery in Laski gathered crowds of people, and a highland quartet bid farewell to his ashes with the crisp note "Krywaniu, Krywaniu wysoki...". When he put his card in the can on Pyszny Peak in the summer of 1949, he did not anticipate that his "footprint on earth" would not be fleeting at all. (Józef Nyka).

HEJ, KRYWANIU, KRYWANIU WYSOKI

http://www.nyka.home.pl/glos_sen/pl/200305.htm