Ancient TL

www.ancienttl.org · ISSN: 2693-0935

Ancient TL, 2000. *Obituary:Galina Hütt.* Ancient TL 18(2): 63.
https://doi.org/10.26034/la.atl.2000.323

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Obituary

Galina Hütt (1937 - 2000)

Galina Hütt was born 17 February 1937 in Odessa (Ukrainia, then SSR), she was the daughter of Isaak Koz.

Her higher education was in 'pure' Physics: In 1954, she started her University studies in the Department of Physics of Tartu University (Estonia, then SSR), the "Oxford" of Estonia, where she was to stay until 1974. After graduation (in 1959), she was briefly high school teacher, then in the Institute of Physics of Estonian Academy of Sciences, as a researcher in the Department of Radiation Physics. She was awarded in 1972 the title of 'Candidate in Physics' (that is equivalent to Ph.D.) at Tartu University for her work:
"The study of microstructure of defects in calcium sulphide", Dr Ivar Jaek being her supervisor .

In 1974, she started working in the Institute of Geology of Estonian Academy of Sciences, shifting from luminescence studies to more applied thermoluminescence Dosimetry and Dating. She started to participate to International Scientific life (Oxford Seminar, 1978 etc.) in so far as was possible in USSR at the time. Her major study in this field was made at the Dating Seminar in Cambridge, (1987), it was actually a contribution of physics of luminescence to Dosimetry:
"G.Hütt, I.Jaek, J.Tchonka (1988) Optical dating: K-feldspars optical response stimulation spectra. Quaternary Science Reviews, 7, 381-385.).
This is known now as the method of IRSL. It was first received with strong scepticism, before becoming a standard method for feldspar TL dating.

In 1986, she became head of the 'Paleodosimetry Laboratory' in the Institute of Geology of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, which she set up with proper equipment and staffed with a competent team of scientists.

In 1990, she became 'Doctor in Physics' at Latvian State University (Riga), (title equivalent to what is known in some countries as 'Habilitation' to apply for a Professorship). Meanwhile, she had a very important scientific activity, witnessed by many publications. It is impossible to quote here all her studies, some 100 articles dealing with other fundamental studies of luminescence of materials and minerals, dating of sediments, accident paleodosimetry (Chernobyl, Kiisa), over all these years up to the last meeting in Rome (1999). These studies have been conducted with her colleagues from Estonia, but also from Finland, Germany, Great Britain etc.

Her life was not made easy by circumstances, political or others : From her younger age, when she remembered fleeing from Odessa in 1941 under Nazi bombing; sharing all the upheavals of Estonia, her adoptive country recovering independence during these years; a very bad accident which left her getting around on crutches for years, not to mention her dramatic murder.

All her achievements above mentioned, such as setting up a laboratory of international standard, could be accounted for by the strong resolution of Galina. She was a lady of a rather steadfast and unwavering nature, a formidable opponent in scientific debates, who managed to get things done against all obstacles.
But she was also a very kind person. Most people who worked with her became her friends and have a feeling of sadness thinking of the small laboratory way north in Tallinn, and the nice time spent there.

Raphaël Visocekas