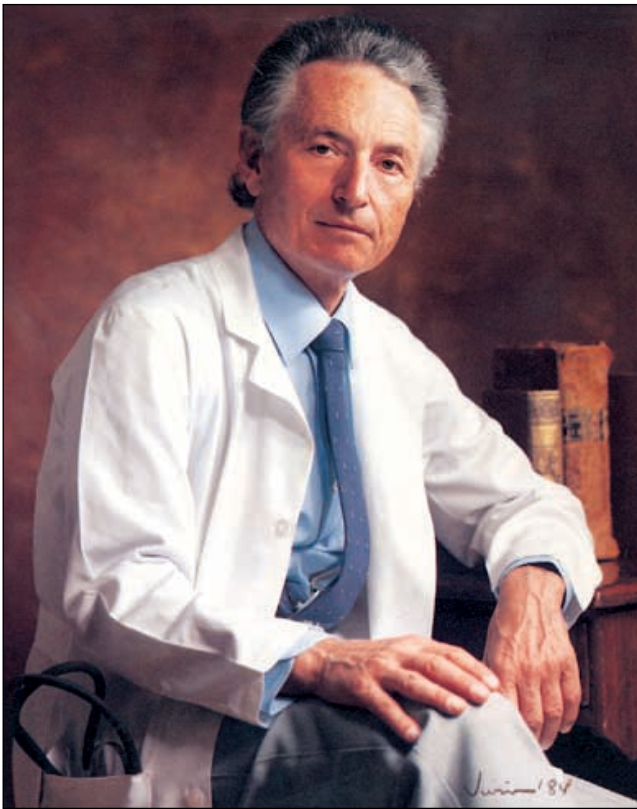


# Happy ninetieth to Professor Zdeněk Mařatka, M.D., D.Sc.



Zdeněk Mařatka was born in Prague on June 27, 1914. He is the most respected and renowned Czech gastroenterologist.

He spent his childhood in a high cultural familial milieu. His father Josef Mařatka (1874 - 1937), was an academic sculptor, a professor of the college of applied arts in Prague, a pupil and collaborator of August Rodin and of J. F. Myslbek, along with whom Josef Mařatka belongs in the pantheon of Czech sculptors. Zdeněk Mařatka's mother Zdenka Procházková and especially her brother Ladislav Procházka, MD, an outstanding physician and composer, influenced his interest in classical music. From them he acquired the ability to present his ideas succinctly and in an interesting manner.

Mařatka is the proud parent of five children. His elder son and two daughters have also devoted their lives to medicine, one of whom is a gastroenterologist in the U.S.A. The youngest son, Kryštof lives mainly in

Paris and is preserving the family tradition in the arts. He is currently one of the best Czech composers of contemporary classical music as well as an excellent pianist. Even if Mařatka has not been an active artist, the genes for art enabled him to adopt an artistic view of medical problems. All that he has written, whether on the many aspects of medical problems or on philosophical aspects of life, as for instance in his beautiful memoirs, has been of the highest literary standard. His ability to think beyond traditional boundaries has enabled him to view the current and anticipated problems of gastroenterology in a very original manner.

Mařatka studied at the Charles University Prague, and graduated in January 1939. The German occupation having started, Czech universities were closed for the next 6 years. He worked at the 2nd Department of Medicine of the University Hospital of Prague, but his academic activity was interrupted and could not be resumed until after the end of the 2nd world war in 1945. He was assigned to work in gastroenterology, and he has remained faithful to this effort ever since. To acquire the latest knowledge in gastroenterology, he spent a year (1947 - 1948) with Professor A. C. Ivy, a famous gastrointestinal physiologist at the University of Illinois in Chicago, an institution at the cutting edge of investigation in gastroenterology. His professional growth was rapid. In 1947 he was appointed associate professor (docent) at Charles University. After the communist coup in 1948 his academic career was negatively influenced again. He had to leave the medical faculty and in 1958, he accepted the post of head of gastroenterological division at the Na Bulovce Hospital in Prague 8 and worked there until retiring in 1984. A thaw in the political climate in the year 1966 enabled him to defend his scientific medical thesis (Dr.Sc., the highest scientific degree in Czechoslovakia, corresponding to D.Sc.). The nomination of Mařatka in 1973 to be appointed to a professorship was rejected by the communist administration but after the political changes in 1989, the appointment was quickly approved and he became a most respected member of the Charles University.

Back to some selected gastroenterological activities: Mařatka has spent his whole professional life devoted to several problems of inflammatory bowel disease. In 1952 he and Vladimír Wagner published the first proof of specific colon antibodies in ulcerative colitis. This emphasised the importance of autoimmunity in the pathogenesis of ulcerative colitis. His last paper published recently, admirably presents a new two-component hypothesis of ulcerative colitis. As with his intense interest in ulcerative colitis, Mařatka also investigated Crohn's disease. Together with Jan Nedbal, he described for the first time the high prevalence of nephrolithiasis after colectomy for inflammatory bowel disease.

No less important was his interest in stomach diseases. Together with Jaroslav řetka he used a new type of gastric biopsy tube which enabled the precise diagnosis of chronic gastritis and permitted a critical view of its clinical importance. His consideration of peptic ulcer disease and of gastric secretion resulted in the proposal of a new system of gastric acidity examination.

Mařatka's papers have been of fundamental significance in the understanding of functional disorders in gastroenterology. Many of the characteristics of several symptoms of functional dyspepsia and their origins that he described in the sixties are consistent with the conclusions reached in 1999 at the conference known as Rome II. It is a pity, that some of the syndromes he described, for example, the coeliac plexus syndrome or neurodigestive asthenia have passed almost unnoticed by the non-Czechoslovak gastroenterology community.

His great experience in endoscopic examinations and his extraordinary capability in describing the endoscopic findings together with his logical conclusions led him to create a completely original terminology, definitions and diagnostic criteria in digestive endoscopy. It was a step of fundamental importance for all endoscopists who want to define precisely what they see and convey a clear description to everyone reading their endoscopic conclusions. It is gratifying that his pioneering work on endoscopic terminology has been very favourably accepted throughout the whole world and serves as the basis of the latest investigations in this direction.

Many of Mařatka's professional activities brought him outstanding honours both from the Czech Republic and from abroad. Among them is the highest

Czech medical award, The Knight of Czech Medical Affairs (2001) from the Czech Medical Chamber. It is awarded to the best physicians and to the physicians with the highest moral qualities. Mařatka chose The Qualities of Knighthood for the theme of his beautifully presented celebratory lecture. Everyone present at this lecture had to become conscious of the extraordinary dedication and sense of responsibility of the speaker. Other awards with which he has been presented are The Purkyně Medal from the Czech Medical Society (1965 and 1994), the Gold Medal of Charles University (1994), A Certificate Honouring Him presented by The European Society of Digestive Endoscopy (1999), the Hlávka Award from the Hlávka Foundation and from the Czech Literary Foundation (1999), and the Literary Award from the Presidium of Charles University (2003).

His organisational ability led to appointment to positions of responsibility and recognition.

In the Czech Republic:

President of the Czech Society of Gastroenterology (1990 - 1994)

Editor-in-Chief of the Journal for Czech and Slovak Gastroenterology (1969 - 1999)

Abroad:

President of the European Society of Digestive Endoscopy (1976 - 1980)

Vice-president of the World Society of Digestive Endoscopy (1978 - 1982),  
its Honorary Member (1992)

President of the First European Congress of Digestive Endoscopy in Prague (1968)

Chairman of the Commission for Terminology and Computerisation of the World Society of Digestive Endoscopy (1978 - 1998)

Member of the committee of the European Society of Gastroenterology and general secretary of the 8th European Congress of Gastroenterology in Prague (1968)

President of the European Society of Colo-Proctology (1980 - 1982)

President of the Congress of this Society in Prague (1979)

member of many foreign gastroenterological and endoscopical societies and of the editorial boards of several journals.

Mařatka published 7 monographs in Czech:  
Ulcerative colitis (1948)

Basic Rectoscopy with K. Herfort (1955)  
 Constipation (1959)  
 Practical Gastroenterology (1964, 1968)  
 Errors in X-ray Diagnostics of the Digestive Tract with  
 F. Pirk (1988)  
 Clinical Gastroenterology (1988)  
 Gastroenterology (1999)  
 and 7 in foreign languages:  
 Dyspepsie. Funktionelle Störungen des oberen Ver-  
 dauungstraktes (1992)  
 Terminology, Definitions and Diagnostic Criteria in  
 Digestive Endoscopy,  
 (1984 - 2002), repeated editions, translated into 14  
 languages  
 Illustrated Terminology, Definitions and Diagnostic  
 Criteria in Digestive Endoscopy (1992 - 1994), trans-  
 lated into 4 languages,  
 Multimedia CD-ROM on Digestive Endoscopy and  
 Gastroenterology, (1996 - 2003), translated into 5 lan-  
 guages  
 Endoscopic Diagnosis in Gastrointestinal Endoscopy  
 (1999 - 2003), translated into 4 languages  
 and Differential Diagnosis in Gastrointestinal Endos-  
 copy (2003)

In addition to these 14 monographs he has pub-  
 lished more than 300 original papers in Czech, English  
 and other languages and read several hundreds of  
 lectures. His high-spirited and lively contributions to  
 discussions have contributed refreshing enrichment  
 to all congresses.

He has participated in nearly 200 foreign projects,  
 mostly actively. There were lectures and organisatio-  
 nal responsibilities during international congresses,  
 activities in several international organizations, etc.

Let me summarize the significance of Professor  
 Mařatka in gastroenterology. He has created a Czech  
 conception of gastroenterology and maximally contri-  
 buted in the introduction of Czech gastroenterology  
 to the international gastroenterological forum. He has  
 also contributed to some basic etiopathogenetic pro-  
 blems in gastroenterology (IBD, etc.). As long-stan-

ding editor-in-chief of the Czech and Slovak Journal  
 of Gastroenterology and the author of several gastro-  
 enterological textbooks he has played and plays  
 a significant role in the maintenance of a high level of  
 postgraduate education of Czech and Slovak gastro-  
 enterologists. He has developed an international ter-  
 minology for endoscopic observations. He still holds  
 many important functions in national and international  
 societies and editorial boards of many journals. He  
 participates permanently in medical activities, he  
 gives lectures, remains active not only as speaker in  
 discussions, but continues to publish original papers  
 up to the present.

In 1959, when I was charged with working in gas-  
 troenterology, no gastroenterologist had worked at  
 this time at our department of medicine in Hradec  
 Králové. I was deciding what the best way for me to  
 qualify in gastroenterology in the shortest time and at  
 the best level would be. I asked Professor Mařatka to  
 arrange for me to come to his regularly organized  
 monthly meetings at his department of gastroentero-  
 logy. Usually, Mařatka gave an opening lecture about  
 some new problems, followed with an informal dis-  
 cussion accompanied with the tea and cakes, after  
 which analyses of concrete interesting cases and  
 endoscopic examinations were presented. There was  
 a nice atmosphere which could not be forgotten by  
 anybody who attended these meetings. For myself, it  
 was the best introduction into modern gastroentero-  
 logy and provided inspiration for my future research  
 work. If it would not be too boastful, I would like to  
 state that I am proud to say that Professor Mařatka  
 was my teacher of gastroenterology and take this  
 occasion to thank him for all he has done not only for  
 me, but also for Czech and international gastroente-  
 rology and wish him all the best for the coming years  
 on behalf of all his friends and followers and of the  
 whole Czech gastroenterological community.

Multos annos!

Sincerely

Professor Bohumil Fixa, M.D., D.Sc.