

IN MEMORIAM

Edmund Strzelczyk 1930 – 2005

Edmund Strzelczyk, Full Professor in the Institute of General Biology and Microbiology of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland, passed away on March 8, 2005; he was the founder and for many years the head of the Department of Microbiology.

Professor Strzelczyk was born on May 3, 1930, in Michałkowice (Siemianowice) near Katowice. In 1950 he graduated from the Adam Mickiewicz Gymnasium in Katowice and subsequently became a student of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the Copernicus University in Toruń. In 1953 he completed there his bacheloriata, and decided to continue his study of microbiology at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. He graduated in 1955 with a Master's Degree in microbiology.

As a student of the fourth year he was hired as a younger assistant in the Division of Microbiology of the University in Lublin. After graduation he was a member of the faculty of the Division of Agricultural Microbiology at the Agricultural School in Lublin until 1965.

He was the favorite student of Professor Jadwiga Marszewska-Zięmiecka, an outstanding microbiologist who was very well known in Poland and abroad. She spent her scientific practice in the Pasteur Institute in Paris as a result of a private invitation of Sergiusz Winogradski, a collaborator of Pasteur.

In Lublin, Professor Strzelczyk met for the first time Professor Władysław Kunicki-Goldfinger, intellectual and renown authority in the field of microbiology, a philosopher of nature, and a scientist with very broad and astonishing knowledge. While a young assistant in Lublin, Professor Strzelczyk, as a fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation, left for two years to work in the Microbiology Institute in Ottawa, Canada. During his stay there he continued his research on nitrogen fixing bacteria. After returning from Canada, still in Lublin, he completed his Ph.D. in 1961, and within the next four years he finalized his so-called habilitation (equivalent to tenure). In 1965, as a young docent he moved to Toruń as a head of the Microbiology Laboratory, which, very soon became the Department of Microbiology.

In 1967–68 he again left for Canada to work in the Institute of Cell Biology in Ottawa, this time as a scholar funded by the National Research Council of Canada.

In 1972, as one of the youngest scientists of his field, he was promoted to ordinary Professor; he received the title of the Full Professor in 1978.

Professor Strzelczyk created at Nicolaus Copernicus University a unique scientific center of research devoted to the microbiology of soils and forest trees. He was intrigued by the forest from early years; in fact just after graduating from the gymnasium he initially planned to study at the Forestry Faculty of the Agricultural Academy in Kraków. This love for the forest and the passion for research resulted in his professional successes and personal satisfaction.

Research work of Professor Strzelczyk was dealt with mutual interactions between plant roots and soil microorganisms. He was also interested in the importance of soil microbes in sustainable functioning of forest ecosystems. In order to analyze this complex ecological phenomenon, it was necessary to first learn



the physiological and biochemical properties of microorganisms, both of bacteria and fungi. Therefore, he investigated the microbial production of plant hormones, vitamins, enzymes, amino acids, organic acids, sugars and siderophores. He also studied the influence of detrimental factors (heavy metals, pesticides) on the metabolic activity of soil microorganisms. One of his pioneering findings was to point out that bacteria, the so-called mycorrhization helper bacteria, are active participants in the sustainable functioning of the mutual interaction between the tree roots and mycorrhizal fungi. The Department of Microbiology became the only department in Poland to work on this kind of microorganisms.

Professor Strzelczyk published in 19 international and 16 domestic scientific journals. He is the author, or co-author, of 200 publications and two text books. He was distinguished two times by receiving a diploma of appreciation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture; three times he was awarded by the Ministry of High Education of Poland. He also received the award of the Secretary of Polish Academy of Sciences, and more than a dozen awards from the Chancellor of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

For many years Professor Strzelczyk was a member of the Committee of Microbiology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Committee of Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry of Polish Academy of Sciences, and of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Microbiology Warsaw University. He served also on the editorial board of *Acta Microbiologica Polonica* and the *Polish Journal of Soil Science*.

He collaborated with many important scientific institutions such as the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Forestry Sciences Laboratory (Oregon, U.S.A.), and the pharmaceutical company Hoffman – La Roche & Co (Switzerland). He taught and lectured in Canada, U.S.A., Switzerland, Italy and Germany. He also collaborated with Polish scientific institutions for example with the Institute of Dendrology of Polish Academy of Sciences in Kórnik, Forest Research Institute in Warsaw/Sękocin, and the Faculty of Forestry of Agricultural Academies in Kraków and Poznań.

He never turned down any request for professional help in the identification of microbial contaminations, determination of bactericidal agents, and protection of the production processes against microbial corrosion. For many years he was the head of the Laboratory of Intravenous Injection Solutions of the District Hospital in Toruń.

He was the thesis advisor of more than 200 Master's Degree students, and 13 graduate students who completed the Ph.D. program; two of his students received the title of professor. He was rather a demanding teacher and head of the Department; to get his approval and appreciation was always very rewarding.

Professor Lesław Badura from the Silesian University in Katowice standing at the coffin during the last farewell of Professor Strzelczyk, with deep grief said:

“... I would like to point out another, maybe the most important feature of the characteristic of your nature – you were always very humble and well wishing to all people. In addition, you were characterized by the honesty, rightness and extraordinarily touching demeanor. In spite of the fact that in the scientific matters you were demanding and you did not accept the compromises, always you were able to find time to explain complex scientific problems, and also those taken from life”

We believe that the life achievements of Professor Strzelczyk will be remembered throughout the scientific world.

Did he realize all of his professional desires? Perhaps not. He planned to complete a book on “Microbiology of the forest”...

Desires are the last to die.

Hanna Dahm