

IN MEMORIAM PROFESSOR MIRCEA D. BANCIU (1941–2005)

Mircea Desideriu Banciu was born on August 19th 1941 in Hunedoara to parents Clara, a French language teacher, and Axente Sever, a chemist.

On his father's side, Mircea Banciu was the descendent of an old intellectual family from Săliște, a village community in Mărginimea Sibiului, famous for being the birth-place of seven members of the Romanian Academy. One of these members was his grandfather's brother, the illustrious savant and patriot, Axente Banciu.

As a teenager, Mircea Banciu spent long periods of time in his family's home in Săliște during the holidays. The intellectual atmosphere in his family undoubtedly marked his personality. The house in Săliște remained the home to which he always loved to return.

He attended the "Sfântul Sava" College, a prestigious high school in Bucharest, and then the Industrial Chemistry University of Bucharest, where he graduated top of his class in 1962.

At University, he studied under Professor Costin Nenitzescu, a well-known personality referred to as "Magister" by his students and co-workers. This was undoubtedly a crucial moment in Mircea Banciu's education and career. Professor Nenitzescu identified Mircea Banciu as a student with exceptional intellectual abilities and a thirst for knowledge, and invited him to work in his laboratory. Upon graduation, he became Magister's assistant and began working toward a PhD, which he earned in 1969.

In his early PhD years, Mircea Banciu began a working relationship with Professor Ecaterina Cioranescu-Nenitzescu that lasted until she died. She and the Magister were the two exceptional influences on his career and two of his most important collaborators. They helped to shape Mircea Banciu's personality and became his role models.

Mircea Banciu's career advanced steadily; he became a Lecturer in 1972, Associate Professor in 1980, and Professor in 1990 at the Organic Chemistry Department of the Industrial Chemistry University of Bucharest. He worked there with the same commitment until a few weeks before his premature end.

During his seminars, laboratories and courses, Mircea Banciu tried with patience and love to instill his professional passion to more than 40 generations of students. Professor Banciu, known for his exigency and correctness, became a professional role model. Many of his disciples continued to work with him for their bachelor's diploma, PhD theses, and became close collaborators.

Like his Magister, Professor Mircea Banciu was not only a teacher of science, but a creator of science as well. Author of more than 150 internationally published original papers, Mircea Banciu extended his research well beyond the traditional fields of his professors. Some notable examples are:

Flash-Vacuum Pyrolysis (FVP) as a tool in mechanistic and synthetic chemistry; applications to cyclic, polycyclic and heterocyclic systems. Mircea Banciu led the only research group in Romania working in this remarkable branch of organic chemistry. At the international level, he initiated research in the field of flow vacuum pyrolyses on zeolites.

Synthesis and interconversion (photochemical, thermal, metal catalyzed) of benzo- and polybenzoannelated valence isomers of annulenes and benzoannulenes.

Synthesis and structure of multiple fused polycyclic hydrocarbons, functional derivatives and aromatic heterocycles; strained polycyclic systems.

Carbenium ions reactions: solvolyses and deaminations, reversible rearrangements through carbenium ions; kinetics and mechanisms of solvolyses; syntheses of biological active compounds using carbenium ions' reactions.

Biologically active compounds; syntheses and interactions of organo-metallic compounds with enzymes; carbonic anhydrase inhibitors and activators.

Stereoselective reactions in heterogeneous catalysis.

Applications of physical methods for organic compound structure elucidation.

His exceptional research activity involved both collaboration with other research teams from European universities (Florence, Marseilles) and Australian ones (Melbourne, Brisbane) and participation in many international chemistry congresses and conferences. He also wrote eleven books on organic chemistry and the history of chemistry.

Mircea Banciu became a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy in 1991 and full member in 2000. Starting with 2002, he was the President of the Chemical Sciences Section of the Romanian Academy. He was the editor-in-chief of the journal "Revue Roumaine de Chimie" and the regional editor of the "Arkivoc" and "Molecules" periodicals.

Last but not least, he was an exceptional family man who loved his wife Anca, and his daughter Cristina. Anca is also a chemist and collaborated with Mircea Banciu on many projects.

Professor Banciu had a special relationship with his students. For more than twenty years, he took them camping in the spectacular Fagaras Mountains during long industrial internship weekends. Within his own research group and among all the department's personnel, he strove to create an atmosphere that was pleasant and familiar, but also encouraged the most serious scientific activity.

Mircea Banciu passed away much too soon and too unfair, gone to the world of shadows. He leaves behind, for his many young disciples, students, collaborators and colleagues, the image of an exceptional mentor and a scientific researcher, always dedicated to his vocation.

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