

IN MEMORIAM

**PROF. DR. ŽIVOJIN BLAŽENČIĆ
(1937-2005)**

UDC 929 Blaženčić Ž. : 59(061.75)

The scientist Dr. Živojin Blaženčić passed away suddenly in Belgrade on October 28, 2005. A full professor at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Blaženčić was for many years a zealous worker in Serbian botany during the second half of the 20th century.

Živojin Blaženčić was born on July 19, 1937 into a middle-class family in Sremska Mitrovica, where he completed elementary school. From 1947 he lived in Belgrade, where he attended the First Belgrade High School for Boys, from which he graduated in 1955. In the school year of 1955/56, he registered as a student in the Department of Biology of Belgrade University's Faculty of Science, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1960. During the third and fourth years of his studies, he took part as a volunteer on a research team of the Institute of National Nutrition that carried out detailed investigations in various cities of former Yugoslavia on the metabolic functions of workers performing hard physical labor. He gained his first teaching experience as a grade school biology teacher already before doing military service and taught in a school for adults upon his return from the army.

In 1962 he was appointed Graduate Assistant for the subject Nutritious and Poisonous Plants at the University of Belgrade's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. From the very beginning, he devoted himself in a self-sacrificing way to pedagogical activities advancing the practical teaching of general botany. Through herbarium collections, anatomical preparations, and field instruction, he tirelessly acquainted his students with secrets of the plant world, especially those of spice, medicinal, poisonous, and fodder plants. As a graduate assistant at the indicated faculty, he was also engaged in practical instruction of students in the subject Biology.

At the beginning of 1974, he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation entitled "Ecological Study of Morphological Adaptations of Some Xerophytic Grasses



(Poaceae) in Steppe Fragments of Fruška Gora" in the Department of Biology of Belgrade University's Faculty of Science. He continued his university teaching career at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, where he was appointed Assistant Professor in 1975, Associate Professor in 1981, and Full Professor in 1986. From 1989 he was Chairman of the Department of Nutritious and Poisonous Plants.

Professor Dr. Živojin Blaženčić lectured on the subject Nutritious and Poisonous Plants from his appointment as an instructor until his retirement in 2002. Throughout his long teaching career, he constantly enriched the content of this course, imparting modern botanical knowledge to students through theoretical as well as practical, laboratory, and field instruction. His sense of responsibility and devotion to teaching were manifested in the writing of textbooks for students of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Co-authored by Prof. Dr. Jakov Danon, the textbook "Nutritious, Medicinal, Poisonous, and Spice Plants" was first printed in 1977 and reissued in 1985 and 1989. An updated edition of this textbook was published in 1992. At the very end of his teaching career, Dr. Blaženčić published another textbook for students of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Entitled "Fodder Plants," it was published in collaboration with his assistant Dr. Svetlana Grdović, his successor and perpetuator of the botanical tradition of this faculty.

From 1962 Dr. Živojin Blaženčić was an outside associate of the Department of Plant Physiology, Biochemistry, and Ecology of the Siniša Stanković Institute for Biological Research in Belgrade.

During 1974 and 1975, he took part in practical teaching of the subject Botany at Belgrade University's Faculty of Pharmacy.

Together with his teaching activities, Prof. Dr. Živojin Blaženčić at the same time devoted himself to scientific research, mainly in the areas of phytocenology,

floristics, ecology of certain plant species (especially melliferous and spice plants), and the ecophysiology of dominant plant species in the characteristic vegetation zones of our planet. The direction of his botanical interests can be traced through countless presented results of his field and laboratory research, from those contained in his doctoral dissertation to ones discussed in many original works published in scientific journals or communicated at numerous scientific meetings. The scientific opus of Professor Blaženčić includes a total of 147 bibliographic units: he was a co-author of several textbooks (five) and monographs (10) and alone or in collaboration with colleagues published more than 70 scientific and expert papers in domestic and foreign journals, as well as more than 60 communications printed in abstracts of papers presented at scientific meetings at home and abroad.

His primary scientific interests were in the cenology, autecology, and ecophysiology of plants, and problems in these areas remained subjects of special interest to him throughout his entire career. His scientific activities included the independent or joint authorship of many studies, and he took part in creation of the monographs "Plant Communities and Habitats of the Stara Planina Mountains" and "Plant Communities of Northeastern Serbia." Long-term investigations of different types of meadow-pasture phytocenoses in Serbia were followed by specific research on melliferous plants and nectar production of the melliferous flora in natural phytocenoses of Serbia for the advancement of apiculture. In addition to this, he was active in conducting applied research on problems significant for veterinary practice, including the plant food of game animals, bee pasturage, and use of spice plants in the technological processing of meat.

However, the greatest number of his papers and communications present results obtained in investigating vascular plants and the Charophyta of aquatic ecosystems. Professor Dr. Živojin Blaženčić devoted a large part of his research time and gifts to study of the botanical component of aquatic habitats. The decades-long studies of aquatic plants (especially charophytic algae) conducted by Dr. Blaženčić in collaboration with his wife and scientific associate Prof. Dr. Jelena Blaženčić were highly complex and encompassed the entire territory of former Yugoslavia. It can be freely stated that there is no-one today in the region more knowledgeable about the vegetation of its extremely diverse aquatic ecosystems, including not only various types of lakes, bogs, marshes, and swamps, but also river valleys, springs, and fountain-heads. The exceptionally valuable results obtained by Živojin and Jelena Blaženčić today constitute the essen-

tial basis of all future research on the region's freshwater macrophytes and algae.

Professor Dr. Živojin Blaženčić was an unforgettable and irreplaceable participant in the team field research that for years was continually performed under the auspices of the Department of Plant Physiology, Biochemistry, and Ecology of the Institute for Biological Research in Belgrade. This research was conducted within the framework of projects involving complex ecological and ecophysiological investigation of the characteristic plants and most significant forest and meadow-steppe plant communities of our mountains (Šar Planina, Jastrebac, Fruška Gora, Avala), lowlands (Delibatska Peščara, Pomoravlje, Posavina, Podunavlje), and Mediterranean regions (the Dubrovnik Riviera, Montenegrin Coast, and shores of Lake Skadar). In addition, he was also part of the team that worked on the "Vegetation Map of Serbia," whose creation was a project organized by the Department of Phytocology of the above-mentioned institute.

He was a modest and unobtrusive supervisor ready to assist associates and support and encourage young scientists. Through a well-intentioned and measured pedagogical approach with useful advice and discussions, he helped many young investigators prepare their M.S. and Ph.D dissertations. He served as an advisor or commission member in the defense of M.S. and Ph.D dissertations and specialization theses at both the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and the Faculty of Biology of Belgrade University.

Thanks to his botanical knowledge, he was chosen to serve as a reviewer of botanical monographs and scientific papers, as an expert advisor to the Josif Pančić Student Publishing Society, as a member of the City Committee on Education and Culture, as a member of the jury selecting recipients of the October Award for Expert and Scientific Works by Students of Belgrade University, and as Secretary of the Organizing Committee of the First Congress of Ecologists of Yugoslavia.

Professor Dr. Živojin Blaženčić took part in work of the Serbian Biological Society, both as Secretary of the Society and as a member of the Executive Council. He served as a delegate of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in the Parliament of Belgrade University, a member of the university's Expert Scientific Council on the Biological Sciences, a member of the Board of the Department of Biological Sciences, and a member of other professional and civic organizations.

Desiring to refine his research on melliferous plants, he spent a short period of time during 1979 in the labora-

tory of the Experimental Apiculture Station in Sofia, where he mastered methods of monitoring nectar production and ways of determining the honey potential, optimal times for nectar and pollen grazing, etc.

He received various forms of recognition for his wholehearted commitment to teaching and science. They included a diploma from the Serbian Biological Society for success in scientific work, teaching, and civic activities (1972); a citation of gratitude from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Belgrade for work and contributions to the faculty's development (1977); an October Award of the City of Belgrade for outstanding achievement in the area of art and science (for the joint work of a number of authors "Plant Communities and Habitats of the Stara Planina Mountains"); and a citation of gratitude from the Presidency of the Veterinary Faculty's branch of the Organization of Socialist Youth of Serbia for taking

part in the work of this organization (1986). Doctor Blaženčić was also an athlete and as such received a diploma from the Sport Society of Belgrade University's Faculty of Science (1979) for his participation in the 1500-m race event, which contributed to the society's work.

His fellow university instructors and associates, researchers and botanists throughout former Yugoslavia, and especially his closest friends and colleagues in Belgrade will remember Prof. Dr. Živojin Blaženčić as an outstanding professor, patient and systematic teacher, and modest and hard-working scientist. He will also be remembered as a man of great sincerity, a gracious and good-natured person, and a warmhearted friend. His mark remains on those who continue his work and will be felt in the future results and history of Serbian botany in general.

Prof. Dr. Branka Stevanović