

CRISTOFOR I. SIMIONESCU (1920–2007).

In memoriam

A legend has gone...

Fellow Cristofor I. Simionescu, who devoted his entire life to the natural and synthetic polymer chemistry, passed away on August 6, 2007.

Cristofor I. Simionescu, born in Dumbraveni-Suceava, on July 17, 1920, received his chemical engineer (*magna cum laude* – 1944) and *Ph D* degree (1948) at the “Gheorghe Asachi” Polytechnic School of Iași/Romania. He became Professor and Head of department (since 1952), Vice-rector (1951–1952) and Rector (1953–1976) of the “Gheorghe Asachi” Polytechnic Institute of Iasi; Head of the Macromolecular Chemistry Laboratory (1956–1970) and Director of the “Petru Poni” Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry, Iasi. He was elected corresponding member (1955) and full member of the Romanian Academy (1963), Vice-president of the Academy of Romania (1974–1990) and President of the Iasi Branch of the Romanian Academy (1963–1974 and 1989–2001).



He was the founder of higher education and research in the fields of cellulose and macromolecular compounds chemistry in Romania. In his position as professor, diverse disciplines were taken up and developed in the Department of Natural and Synthetic Macromolecular Chemistry. His main scientific contributions referred to organic and macromolecular chemistry, wood and reed chemistry, pulp and paper chemistry and technology, chemistry of polysaccharides, mechanical chemistry of polymers, plasma chemistry and synthesis of life precursors (he is the author of the *cold theory* on the origins of life). Cristofor Simionescu has added a lot to the knowledge of wood species in Romania, especially of the fast growing (poplar and willow) ones, for their possible utilization as raw materials for pulp and paper industry. In the field of paper chemistry, his contributions to paper sizing under alkaline conditions and to the obtaining of synthetic papers deserve special attention. The name of professor

Simionescu is equally related to research devoted to polymer grafting by chemical and physical methods, to polymers based on acetylene with semi- and photo-conducting properties, to copolymers and to their utilization as drug delivery supports. He proposed the theory of conducting in organic polymers, along with the initiation of studies on the synthesis of polymers by electrochemical and radical ways. He demonstrated the role played by radicals in vegetal cancer proliferation and its possible inhibition by antioxidants. Close contacts were maintained with the industrial branches, in both pulp and paper, and polymer processing fields.

The legacy of his research will live on in the numerous students that made their way through his laboratories, in which, along the years, 95 graduates defended their *PhD* theses under supervision of Cristofor Simionescu and 35 of his previous students reached the degree of Professor in prestigious universities from both Romania and abroad.

The scientific work of Cr. I. Simionescu has been documented in 23 books and more than 700 publications and 70 patents.

International activities constituted an essential part of his engagements, as he was member of numerous international societies: fellow of the International Academy of Wood Science, member of the Hungarian Academy, of the New York Sciences Academy, of the Moldavian Academy, of the European Academy of Science and Arts, of the Chemical Societies of France, USA and Romania.

He was honoured with 30 Romanian and foreign medals.

He was the founder and editor-in-chief of the journals *Cellulose Chemistry and Technology* (1967) and *Memoriile Secțiilor Științifice ale Academiei Române – 4th Series*.

He organized numerous international scientific meetings, among which special mention should be made of the 13 *International Symposia on Cellulose Chemistry and Technology*.

Behind this dry listing there stood a man with huge ambition, energy and enthusiasm, good humor, a man of spirit who loved to live and could live out and live through both cloudy and cloudless times.

The rich life-work of Cristofor Simionescu will not fall to dust. The Technical University lives, the Department of Natural and Synthetic Polymers lives, the Macromolecular Chemistry Institute lives, the journals he founded live and the image of Cristofor Simionescu will ever remain in our memory. His passing away is a great loss for the whole community of polymer chemistry and not only.

VALENTIN POPA