

A LETTER

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Deeply respected Professor Simionescu

After our parents brought us into this world and put their complex and lasting mark, leaving a complex and definite impression on our lives, new people enter the scene to influence profoundly our social and professional development. Their contribution to the foundation of our future will continue to occupy a central place in our memory.

I am writing you this letter, dear Professor, 13 years after your departure, to thank you once again for all the important moments in my life to which you actively participated, either kindly helping me through difficult life challenges or thoroughly influencing my scientific career, not necessarily being aware of the profound positive impact of your actions.

The first time I met you and heard you speaking was on the 1st of September 1963 when you, at that time Rector of the “Gh. Asachi” Polytechnic Institute of Iasi, held the opening speech of the new study year. As a fresh student of the Faculty of Industrial Chemistry, I was very impressed by your electrifying speech and from that moment on I wished to attend your lectures. My wish was fulfilled in the 3rd study year, when we had to choose for one of faculty's specialties, and I chose for the Technology of Macromolecular Compounds. Your busy schedule did not allow you to be present at all our classes of macromolecular chemistry. However, the days you managed to be there acquired a festive touch due to the clear and passionate transmission of scientific information. Your lectures stimulated our minds and strengthened our desire to go beyond our limits. In those years you amazed us with several fascinating speeches held in the “Gh. Asachi” aula in which you informed us about the latest discoveries in the field of nucleic acid chemistry.

In my 5th year of study, I was lucky enough to work on my degree thesis in the laboratory you were visiting at least twice a day. Every time you gave us a comment, sometimes friendly, sometimes ironic, but always encouraging. At the end of that year I participated in a contest organized in our faculty, where I presented the results obtained during my degree thesis, on grafting of acrylonitrile onto poly(ethylene terephthalate) by vibratory grinding (under the supervision of

Professor Cleopatra Vasiliu-Oprea). I was twice as happy because the Committee that evaluated the submitted works was presided by you and I even got a prize! The dedication “Urge for scientific creativity” on the book “Mechanochemistry of macromolecular compounds”, that I received as a prize, seemed to have brought me luck in my scientific career.

After this event you offered me the amazing opportunity to start my career at the “Petru Poni” Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry immediately after graduation, in the summer of 1968. Thanks to you I became more self-confident and started to trust in my research skills. This helped me more easily find my way in scientific research.

In those difficult times, while conducting applied research to honor the contracts established with industry, we also had to continue our fundamental research, which was the basis of our PhD theses. The Romanian research institutions which had the opportunity to publish abroad were not many in those days but, due to your persistent efforts, many scientific contributions coming from the “Petru Poni” Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry have been sent for publication in prestigious international journals. Thus, the “Petru Poni” Institute became a reference name at international level for the contributions in the field of macromolecular chemistry, amongst other topics. From you I learnt that “not everything that crosses your mind should come out of your mouth, but everything that comes out of your mouth should go through your head”. These words set a high standard to everything I did in my research career.

You also stood by me in extremely difficult moments in my personal life, when we found out that one of our daughters had to undergo an open cord surgery. It was in the autumn of 1979. I was very confused by this news and could not find any immediate solution to this unexpected problem that we were confronted with. When you heard of this situation, you generously offered us the possibility to go to Fundeni Hospital, to the renowned surgeon Prof. Ioan Pop D. Popa. He kindly gave us all the support and attention we needed, during the surgery as well as during post-operative hospitalization.

I also wish to thank you for your immediately accepted proposal to be the second promotor of my PhD thesis, which was on the way to be sent to referees, after Prof. Mihai Dima, under whose supervision I had finished it, had passed away. After my PhD thesis public defence, I offered you a bunch of black tulips plucked from my father’s garden. You told me that you are interested in bulbs, which means perennity, and not in perishing beauty.