

=== IN MEMORIAM ===

Professor Emeritus Constantin Crăciun
(15 September 1937 – 25 November 2016)

CONSTANTIN CRĂCIUN was born on September 15, 1937, in Pîrscoveni (Olt County, former Romanați County), Romania. Teodor Crăciun, the father of Constantin, graduated Philosophy and Theology at the University of Bucharest and became a devoted priest. He married Eva Cunesco, the daughter of a Moldavian boyar. Tragically, Eva Crăciun passed away while all her four children were very young (Constantin himself being only 3-years-old). Following this suffering moment, Teodor Crăciun moved with his family to Corabia where he was appointed as bishop. Constantin went on a deprived childhood and teenage, graduating the secondary school (Corabia), and the Technical High School for Topography (Bucharest, 1957). Constantin was afterwards appointed a job in Transylvania (Bihor County). At that time, he could not enroll in academic studies because of his politically ‘unhealthy’ as-



sendance, by the communist standards. Soon, however, Constantin was formally adopted by the family that hosted him in Batar village (Bihor County). It was a crucial moment in Constantin’s fate, as he was now ‘eligible’ to become a student at the Faculty of Biology (Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj, 1961-1966). During his undergraduate studies in Biology, Constantin Crăciun was tutored by Professors Eugen A. Pora, Emil Pop, Oreste Marcu, Victor Pop, Ștefan Kiss and others that left their marks on the progress of biological sciences in Cluj-Napoca and Romania. As a student, Constantin was remarked by Professor V. Gh. Radu for his hardworking, sense of responsibility and keenness to take on technical and science challenges. Prof. V. Gh. Radu foresaw

Constantin as a promising researcher and therefore, provided him a position at the Institute of Biological Research in Cluj-Napoca (1966-1978). The Romanian Nobel laureate Professor George E. Palade granted Constantin Crăciun a fellowship for attending a specialization at the Medical School of Yale University, but he was again denied to follow his dreams by the communist policy that restricted the travels in foreign countries. Following a specialization in electron microscopy at the University of Bucharest, Constantin Crăciun together with Professor V. Gh. Radu established the Laboratory of Electron Microscopy of the Babeş-Bolyai University starting in 1971. Since 2000, this Laboratory became the Electron Microscopy Center, which was continuously managed by Constantin Crăciun until his most regretted decease in 2016.



*Professor Dr. C. Crăciun by the transmission electron microscope (TEM) unit at the Electron Microscopy Center (Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca)
(Source: Photography Archive of Electron Microscopy Center - Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca).*

Constantin Crăciun (or simply Costică as known by his family, close friends and colleagues) was appointed as Professor at the Department of Animal Physiology (Faculty of Biology and Geology, Babeş-Bolyai University) as well as associated

Professor at the Faculty of Biology (“Vasile Goldiș” West University, Arad) and the Faculty of Medicine (University of Oradea). The teaching tasks included lectures and laboratories of Cytology, Electron Microscopy and Advanced Cell Structure and Ultrastructure for undergraduate, Master and PhD students. Prof. Crăciun was honored as *Professor Emeritus* for his tremendous contributions to the research development and international visibility of Babeș-Bolyai University. The scientific expertise, active engagement in strengthening and broadening numerous collaborations in addition to development of the state-of-the-art research infrastructure and his unconditioned devotion to science, justified numerous prizes that Prof. Crăciun was awarded. Prof. C. Crăciun was awarded as *Doctor Honoris Causa* of two Universities (“Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine, Cluj-Napoca, and “Vasile Goldiș” West University, Arad) and became a Honorary member of the Romanian Academy of Medical Sciences.

Professor Crăciun deeply dedicated his scientific interest to understanding the structure and function of cell components by employing sophisticated, although highly-accurate electron microscopy techniques. Ultrastructural imaging of a large variety of microbial, plant or animal cell samples either in their native state or impacted by natural compounds (e.g. alcohols, toxins) or xenobiotics (e.g. therapeutics) was brought up to the level of perfection by the skillful hands, sharp eyes combined with a prepared mind and enthusiastic heart of Constantin Crăciun. Numerous scientific papers (more than 500 in total including around 100 papers in international peer-review journals or volumes), books (28 in total including 4 books printed by international publishers), edited volumes (26), patents (9) and research grants (17 as a director) were authored during his entire prodigious career.

Besides his professional qualities as a motivated, focused and highly demanding researcher, Constantin Crăciun was much esteemed and beloved by colleagues and students for his warm and friendly appearance, restless, dynamic and optimistic character, openness to help and collaboration in every aspect of biology. In the same time, Professor Crăciun was known as an equilibrated and easy-going character by balancing the academic duties with outdoor hobbies such as gardening, fishing and hunting. He was a true model both as a human being and as a professional for many generations of students, some of which later became his colleagues and collaborators.

Acknowledgments. The preparation of this material was possible thanks to the contribution of Veronica Crăciun and Adrian Radu Crăciun. The kind support of Lect. Dr. Lucian Barbu, Assoc. Prof. Corina Roșioru, Prof. Nicolae Dragoș, Prof. Corneliu Tarba, and Acad. Octavian Popescu is gratefully acknowledged.

Horia L. BANCIU

*Faculty of Biology and Geology
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca*

