

# AACL BIOFLUX

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## ***In memoriam:* Professor Dr. Iustinian Petrescu**

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It is not difficult to remember Professor Petrescu how he was about 25-30 years ago. He was a mature and dynamic dark-haired man, focused on using each moment for improving his teaching activity, for searching for a scientific paper in the library, for adding some more lines to a book or for making further steps in his research. In the classroom, he used to animate his students through his passionate lectures on the geological stages achieved by our planet Earth, the theoretical concepts being complemented with his own interpretations or genuine descriptions and observations

resulted from his own experience. During the short breaks in-between the classes, his clear and convincing voice could be heard along the halls of the faculty, engaged in friendly discussions with his colleagues. It can be assumed that the greatest satisfaction resulted from his scientific research work – he used to spend countless hours looking into the microscope at pollen grains carefully separated from drill core samples or from bulk samples in the field.

– *Look, this is a walnut looking much better than in the books! A pine, a fir, an exotic oak...* this is how with a restless enthusiasm he reconstructed, based on the minute pollen grains, the forests that millions or tens of millions of years ago were moving with the winds on the present day areas of Oltenia, Sălaj, Jiului Valley etc.

His overwhelming enthusiasm has generated a massive interest in this scientific topic in his students, each of them hoping to feel the joy of understanding the mysteries of the lost geological worlds. Besides the generous and unconditioned initiative that has characterised Professor Petrescu, this was the basis for the foundation of a geological school. More than that, this construction was oriented not only to his own scientific field of interest, but towards any of the study directions that were in need at the department in Cluj and that could contribute to its consolidation. His activity has overlapped with very tensioned historical moments, when the existence of a school of geology in Cluj was questioned. Due to the abnegation of Professor Petrescu, supported by a few other colleagues, this school has survived and it is still active, being a continuous source of high-quality science and experts in the field. The Geological Research Group that was founded by Professor Petrescu in the '80 has represented an ingenious and efficient solution for the foreseeable human resources crisis in the Geology Department. Some of the members of this research group currently form the core of the present-day teaching staff.

Professor Petrescu had genuine wisdom and diplomatic abilities that helped him solve current issues and elegantly anticipate potential - smaller or bigger - conflicts that could have represent a threat for the community's cohesion. These attributes were substantially used during his office as a Dean, first of the Faculty of Biology, Geography and Geology, and later of the Faculty of Environmental Science.

The scientific activity of Professor Petrescu represents an inspiration for the younger researchers, in spite of the more evolved analytical facilities that were not available 30 or 40 years ago. His more than 150 research papers have been published in well-known national and international specialized journals. He published more than 20 books, some of them being new contributions for the Romanian science. It is worthy to mention the books *Plante fosile (Fossil plants)*, *Palinologie (Palynology)*, *Geologia zăcămintelor de cărbuni (Geology of the coal ore deposits)*, *Macro și microflora oligocenă de la Cornești-Aghireș (Oligocene macro and microfauna from Cornești-Aghireș)* – the latter being written in collaboration with academician Răzvan Givulescu, another famous researcher of the fossil flora who also passed away not long ago. In the same time, Professor Petrescu was interested in promoting geology to a wider audience; he published several volumes addressed to the general public, such as: *Algeria – drumuri și popasuri (Algeria – roads and sojourns)*, *Coloși printre viețuitoarele străvechi (Giants among the extinct animals)*, *Pământul – o biografie geologică (Planet Earth – a geological biography)*.

Unfortunately, Professor Petrescu departed us much too early, at an age when he could still work on his numerous unfinished projects. He was struck by a merciless illness which he hardly tried to confront for almost two years. Being always an optimist, he did not stop planning the future, as if each day would have been endless, as if our lives would be infinite.

Let us keep his memory alive, let us respectfully continue his work and thus take forward the ideals he believed in during his whole life.