In Memoriam

Constantine John Alexopoulos

Professor Constantine John Alexopoulos died at his home, after a long illness, on May 15, 1986. He is survived by his wife, Juliet, and his sister, Theodora Pantos of Athens, Greece.

Dr. Alexopoulos was born in Chicago, Illinois, on March 17, 1907, of Greek parents, John Constantine and Chrysoula (Panagopoulos). In 1913, during the Balkan wars, the family returned to Athens so that the father could join the Greek forces fighting the invading Turks in northern Greece. At that time, having been taught at an early age, by his mother, rudimentary arithmetic, and to read, write and speak in the Greek language, the six-year-old boy was placed in the third grade at the Palladion Elementary School; he continued in due course through the First Hellenic School (intermediate), both in Athens, and completed his first year of high school studies at the Second Gymnasium in Piraeus.

Soon after the close of World War I, in 1919, the family returned to the United States, and Alex, knowing very little "Spoken English", entered Lane Technical High School in Chicago. At his parent's insistence, he repeated the first year of high school, because they felt that, since he was already familiar with the content, he would be more able to concentrate on the language. This involved taking daily lecture notes in English, translating them into Greek for understanding, writing the assignments in Greek and retranslating them into English each night for the next day's "recitation". Dr. Alexopoulos maintained in later years that that was the most difficult year of his entire schooling, including the time in graduate school.
Nonetheless, he graduated in 1923 from Lane Technical High School "with highest honors". Subsequently he was awarded three degrees by the University of Illinois (Urbana); B. S. in Agriculture, M. S. in Horticulture (1928), and Ph. D. (1932) in Botany (Mycology).

Dr. Alexopoulos ("Alex", as he was known to his friends and associates) was a broadly trained botanist, with a special, lifelong interest in the fungi. His textbook about these organisms, "Introductory Mycology", (labelled a "Classic" by the publisher) is a definitive work used in universities throughout the world, and it has been translated into six foreign languages. The most recent edition (1979) was co-authored by one of his former graduate students, Professor Charles W. Mims. Dr. Alexopoulos, himself, was the co-author of five other books and 58 papers published in scientific journals and as chapters in several compendia and Encyclopedias.

Dr. Alexopoulos' professional appointments in teaching and research were at the University of Illinois, Kent State University, Michigan State University, the University of Iowa and The University of Texas at Austin. He was Head of the Department of Botany at the University of Iowa from 1956 to 1962; he was appointed Professor of Botany here in 1962 and served as Acting Chairman of the Department of Botany during 1964–65. He held visiting professorships at the Mountain Lake Biological Laboratory, University of Virginia (summers of 1967 and 1969), at the University of Washington (summer of 1970), and at The University of Florida (winter quarter of 1980).

Dr. Alexopoulos was a lucid, enthusiastic and inspiring teacher of both undergraduate and graduate students. During his career he supervised nine M. A. students and twenty-eight Ph. D. students, eighteen of the latter at The University of Texas. He was greatly respected and beloved by his doctoral students who demonstrated their loyalty clearly and to unusual degree. A
number of these now hold excellent positions in first-class institutions.

Dr. Alexopoulos was elected to a number of administrative positions, including the presidencies of the Mycological Society of America (1959), the Botanical Society of America (1963) and the International Mycological Association (1971-1977). He was a member of the editorial board of the journals Lloydia and Brittonia, a member of the National Research Council and of the Board of Trustees of the American Type Culture Collection.

Dr. Alexopoulos was the recipient of many honors, among them: a Senior Research Fellowship at the University of Athens (1954-1955); a Certificate of Merit from the Botanical Society of America (1967); Annual Lecturer of the Mycological Society of America (1968); Annual Bessey Lecturer at Iowa State University (1971), member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Honors of special significance came to Dr. Alexopoulos in later years: he was elected a member of the Academy of Athens (the National Academy of Greece, 1982); elected Honorary Member of the British Mycological Society (1983); Honorary President of the International Mycological Association (1983); he received the "Distinguished Mycologist" award from the Mycological Society of America (1981); and from the same society, "The W. H. Weston Jr. award for Teaching Excellence, in recognition of his contributions to the teaching of Mycology (1983)." (In this connection it should be noted that his course in general mycology at U.T. Austin never failed to be filled with students when he offered it).

To encourage significant research in mycology by young scientists within their first 10 years after receiving the Ph. D. degree, former students of Dr. Alexopoulos established a Prize in his honor, to be granted annually by the Mycological Society of America.

No memorial for Dr. Alexopoulos can be complete without the evaluation of
him as a scientist, teacher and person by his fellow mycologists and students. Therefore, the following excerpts and quotations are included:

"Constantine was enormously appreciated as a mycologist and as a man. His textbooks were a source of inspiration to many other teachers and students and have been used all over the world. His research on slime molds was very distinguished. We can look back on a life of great achievement."

John Webster
President, International Mycological Association, University of Exeter
U. K.

"Professor Alexopoulos' major publications on Myxomycetes in particular have been of considerable value to me personally in conducting courses and work on the "Dictionary of the Fungi". He was held in the highest regard internationally, and I know with great affection, by those privileged to be acquainted with and guided by him also."

Prof. D. L. Hawksworth, Director
Mycological Institute,
Kew, Surrey, U.K.

"..when I drifted into Michigan State, I was putty in the hands of C. J. Alexopoulos. It was Alex who made something—assuming I am something—of that
mess of putty. My thanks must go to Alex. He is my intellectual father."

John Peterson  
Professor and Dean, Emporia State University

"Alex was one of a handful of genuinely significant people in my life... (He) taught by admonition and example, brilliantly."

George Carroll  
Professor, University of Oregon

"I thought of Professor Alexopoulos as my mentor and confidant for a period of more than two decades. He was ultimately THE gentleman Scholar. All who met him were touched by his wisdom. His influence on my life was without equal."

Dale Therian  
Professor, Pennsylvania State University

"Alex's passing ends his struggle with ill health, and all over the world there are many thankful for his life. He has left his own memorial and will always be remembered as one of the outstanding mycologists of the twentieth century. I, like so many, owe him a debt and feel both proud and privileged to have known him."

Geofrey C. Ainsworth, Formerly of the
Commonwealth Mycological Institute
Kew, Surrey, England

"Dr. Alexopoulos was an Honorary Member of our Society. Honorary Membership is restricted to the chosen few, and I remember being present at the meeting of the Council of the Society when his name was proposed. The proposition was greeted with great enthusiasm by all of us and agreed quickly nem con. All of us knew of his distinguished contribution to mycology and we were delighted when he accepted Honorary Membership. We felt that his name on the small roll of such Membership added lustre to our Society. His death will be a great loss both to the subject and to the many of us who knew him personally and so much enjoyed his company."

David H. Jennings, President of the
British Mycological Society

University professors may be interested to read from some pencil-written lecture notes, found among his belongings, Dr. Alexopoulos' own thoughts about the profession:

"Teaching is the world's greatest profession. Great teachers, from Socrates to Weston, have molded humanity's great in various branches of what we call civilization. A teacher must seek to acquire all the knowledge his mind can absorb to share it with his students, to whom he must be utterly dedicated, always increasing his own knowledge through the process of stimulating his student's minds. The teacher-student relationship should be a lasting one, based on mutual respect."

Finally, it should be stated that Dr. Alexopoulos was a delightful,
agreeable and stimulating colleague, whose presence among us did much to
enhance the reputation of the department of Botany at U.T. Austin.

With \[\text{Signature}\]

William H. Cunningham, President of
The University of Texas at Austin

[\text{Signature}]

H. Paul Kelley, Secretary
The General Faculty

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of
Professors Harold C. Bold (Chairman), Jerry J. Brand, and R. Malcolm Brown.