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**IN MEMORIAM**



**Professor Băluță DIACONEASA PhD.**  
**(02.04.1925 – 03.03.2016)**

This spring, when pollen from the alder and hazel already floated in the air, Professor Băluță Diaconeasa passed away after a long illness, just one month before reaching the age of 91. His whole life was shared between family and profession, trying to maintain a balance, difficult to achieve, between these two poles.

Born into a large family in Babiciu, Olt County, he was encouraged by his family and teachers to pursue his studies beyond high school, despite the practical and political difficulties.

He attended the courses of the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the “Victor Babeș” University in Cluj and graduated in 1953. In that year he was already employed at the Plant Physiology Department of the Faculty, where he lectured until 1987, when he retired. He obtained the title PhD. in 1969, based on the thesis he defended at the University of Bucharest – “*Peat bogs of Făgăraș Mountains alpine area. Their phytohistorical importance.*” – under the scientific leadership of Docent Prof. Dr. Traian Ștefureac. Long after Professor Diaconeasa’s retirement, in 1999 Babeș-Bolyai University awarded him the well-deserved title of Honorary Professor.

Within the Romanian biological school his name is linked in to several fields such as plant ecology, physiology, morphology and anatomy, but especially to paleo-vegetation studies, through palynology, a discipline in which he excelled. In all, he was the author of more than 80 original papers, three book chapters and an exhaustive course support manual for the students, “*Plant Cytology*”, of 200 pages.

In 1957, together with his colleague Viorel Soran, Professor Diaconeasa produced an

innovative work on optical microscopy, “*The Ultra-Anoptral microscope, an improvement of Wilska’s method*”, highly appreciated at that time, both in the country and abroad.

He was one of the most enthusiastic disciples of academician Emil Pop, founder of palynology in Romania, with whom he undertook several field campaigns, resulting in valuable joint scientific publications. Professor Diaconeasa published data from many palynological sites of the Romanian Carpathians (in the mountain groups Apuseni, Oaş, Gutâi, Maramureş, Rodna, Harghita, Parâng and Retezat), culminating with the analysis of more sites in the Făgăraş Mountains during his PhD. thesis. His studies also involved the dynamics of vegetation at lower elevations (Transylvanian Plain, Someş Plateau, Trascău Depression, Hârtibaciu Plateau, Praid-Sovata Depression, Romanian Plain, and Dobroudja-Black Sea coast), making possible the comparison of paleo-vegetation features from high and low altitudes.

I knew Professor Diaconeasa for almost four decades, first meeting him in 1978 when I began my studies as a student in the Faculty. He played the most significant role in helping me choose my path and in my training as a palynologist. Since 1992, at the initiative of the palynological team from Marseille, Professor Diaconeasa started a collaboration in which I had the honour to participate right from the beginning and which continued for nearly two decades. This opportunity financially allowed the initiation of a systematic campaign of C14-dating of palynological sites in Romania, within the context of European and national projects. I joined Professor Diaconeasa, together with Professors Jacques-Louis de Beaulieu and Maurice Reille, during the field campaigns conducted in the Romanian Carpathians and in the subsequent publication of the results. I had the privilege of working with him until 2003, and of further staying in touch with him until he passed away.

At the maturity of his research career, Professor Diaconeasa integrated the knowledge obtained, outlining the history of the main wood taxa, during the Late Glacial and/or Holocene, beginning with lime (1993–1994) and continuing with mixed oak species (1995–1996), hornbeam (1997–1998), silver fir (2001), and beech (2003). His papers, which addressed the vegetation evolution in south-eastern Romania, compared to Transylvania (1998), as well as the glacial refugia in the light of palynological research (2002), are of great relevance even today.

His life as a scientist carries on through his achievements. His work and his syntheses serve as a model for today’s palynologists. His students, friends and colleagues will remember Professor Diaconeasa as a modest person, sometimes severe but always human, moral and fair, scientifically rigorous, who declined compromise in any situation. His family will remember him as a loving father and husband, devoted and proud.

On behalf of all his colleagues, collaborators, students and friends who benefited from his advice, support, kindness and knowledge, we pay our homage. Rest in peace!

**Sorina FĂRCAŞ**