

IN MEMORIAM – WALTER BORZANI



Walter Borzani passed away last February 28 at the age of 83. His passing marks a great loss to biochemical engineering and biotechnology. His contribution to these disciplines in the field of microbial processes with special mention to the alcohol fermentation was outstanding.

Professor Borzani was born in São Paulo, Brazil, on November 7, 1924. He graduated in chemical engineering at the Escola Politécnica of the University of São Paulo in 1947 and joined its faculty in 1948 as assistant professor. In 1955 he became full professor. Later in 1966 he joined the Instituto Mauá de Tecnologia where he became Head of the Escola de Engenharia Mauá. In the period 1988-1992 he acted as Director of the Centro de Desenvolvimento Biotecnológico in Joinville, Santa Catarina.

During his fruitful professional and academic life he received many awards and recognitions such as the Brazilian National Prize of Science and Technology in 1993 and the Great Cross of National Scientific Merit in 1996, among others. He published over 100 papers in scientific journals from 1953 to 2006 and authored many chapters and diverse contributions in books and magazines. He was co-editor and co-author of “Biotecnologia”, a three-volume textbook published in 1975 which was the first one written in Latin America; in 1981 and 1983 two other volume were added. This impressive piece of work had a second completely re-written edition in 2001.

His major research interests were centered in the field of microbial growth kinetics, continuous, fed-batch, and high cell density cultures and ethanol production by yeasts, in all of which made significant contributions. He is considered to be the father of biochemical engineering in Brazil and Latin America and hundred of undergraduate and graduate students benefited from his notable lectures through decades.

Borzani's enthusiasm and vision lead him to organize in 1969 a Latin American training course on Biotechnology of Microbial Systems that counted with the participation of such eminent figures as professors Shuichi Aiba from Japan, Arthur Humphrey from USA and Vitalis Moritz and Walter Borzani from Brazil. This course is considered to be a milestone in the development of biotechnology in the region. He also settled the basis of the Latin American Association of Biotechnology and Bioengineering (ALABYB), first known as Latin American Association of Biochemical Engineers and Biotechnologists, by organizing an international meeting in December 1975. This association gave a significant impulse to the development of the discipline in the area by organizing symposia in São Paulo, Guatemala City, Buenos Aires and Mexico City and Latin American congresses in Tucumán-Argentina, La Havana-Cuba, Santiago-Chile and Huatulco-Mexico.

Another not at the least minor aspect of Professor Borzani was his gentleness, humbleness and spirit of service. He was always ready to guide and help to whoever asked for his advice.

We can say that we have lost a great biotechnologist, a great person and a great friend. May he rest in peace.

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