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OBITUARY

Dr. Ferenc Kevei (1942-2003)

Ferenc Kevei, teacher, researcher, inspiring personality and friend to many, passed away on 27 September 2003. His life as a scientist spanned over almost 40 years, and was dominated by his love for fungi, a love carried over to many of his students, colleagues and collaborators.

He was born on 29 September 1942 in Kőszeg, where he attended school (1948-1960). Between 1960 and 1965 he studied at Attila József University in Szeged, and was awarded his diploma in 1965 as a teacher of biology and chemistry. Following this he worked at the Department of Plant Physiology of Attila József University until 1972 when he joined the staff of the Department of Microbiology. From 1998 till 2003 he was head of this department. He carried out enormous teaching activities, holding lectures, seminars and laboratory practicals and supervizing research projects for graduate and PhD students in microbiology. He took an active part in the organization of the new graduate and postgraduate programmes at the university. At the beginning of his academic career his research was focused on the mode of action of steroid glycosides with antifungal activity. This was the topic of his doctoral thesis. At that time he started to work with fungal protoplasts. He additionally studied the possibility of gene transfer among filamentous fungi, especially *Aspergilli*. His thesis entitled "Protoplast fusion of *Aspergilli*", was defended in 1981. He became a Candidate of Biological Sciences in 1981. During the last two decades his interest turned to the mitochondrial DNA organisation of "black *Aspergilli*". On the basis of the work of his team the species of *A. niger*, *A. tubingensis*, *A. carbonarius* and *A. japonicus* were divided into several subgroups according to the RFLP patterns of their mitochondrial DNA. They determined the whole nucleotide sequence of the mtDNA of one representative of both *A. niger* and *A. tubingensis*. Using the protoplast fusion technique, they successfully carried out mitochondrial DNA transmission among heterokaryon-incompatible *Aspergillus* strains. They verified the role of mobile introns in the formation of recombinant progenies. He defended his habilitation in 1999, completed his doctoral thesis in 2002 and became a Doctor of Sciences in 2003. His role in higher education and scientific works were awarded by many honours, among others by the Manninger Rezső Medal of the Hungarian Microbiological Society (2001), and the Széchenyi István Professorship established by the Ministry of Education (1997-2000 and 2001-2003). He was a member of the Society for General Microbiology, the British Mycological Society, the Hungarian Microbiological Society, the Society Hungarian Geneticists, the Hungarian Biological Society, the Hungarian Biochemical Society and the Committee of General Microbiology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Feri was active right up to the last second of his life, working in the laboratory at the Department with his much-loved *Aspergilli*, writing manuscripts, organizing the university life, travelling and attending conferences. Learning and his quest for discovery never stopped. He inspired and enriched the lives of so many.

Selected publications

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