TRIBUTE TO UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR MIRCEA VARVARA
ON HIS 75TH BIRTHDAY

1. Family, childhood village and early years of school

On the 13th of August 1932 in the village of Dealul Morii, Vultureni Commune, Bacau County, in the Valley of Berheci, Anica and Dumitru Varvara’s family rejoiced at the arrival in the world of their first-born child, a boy, baptized Mircea. Five brothers and sisters were to follow: Ştefan, Speranţa, Aneta, Maria and Viorel. With their grandfather, Vasile Plugaru (who died at the age of 91), they made up a family of nine (six children and three adults).

During the war years, 1940-1944, the father of Mircea and his brothers and sisters was called up on military service. He worked in a clerical capacity with a military company. Following the war he became the secretary of a Village Council (1945-1952) and then an accountant in the village of Dealul Morii. For many years he worked long hours at his job only returning home after six in the evening. In these circumstances their mother Anica came to represent their father as the authority figure and was accepted as such by all the Varvara family. Their grand-father’s life and his belief in work was also an example to them.

Honest to perfection, their mother, Anica, loved her children, respecting and understanding them in her gentle soul. When the children were squabbling, calling each other names or pushing each other around, she would tell them: “You should understand each other, love one another, and eat, all of you, from one egg”. It is an original saying, an example of many others from that part of the world.

There is no doubt that their mother, who daily cooked the food for those nine members of the family, was hard-working, wise and just, dividing her diligence between
the household chores and the work of the fields, encouraging her children early to take part in these activities, so that each one had something constructive to do at home, in the fields or with the animals. And it was thus that the head of the family, Dumitru Varvara, the householder, a soldier in his early days, and later a minor public official, gave way to his diligent wife and came to play the supporting role to her within the family.

The village of Dealul Morii, equidistant (60km) between the towns of Bacău and Tecuci, was a growing settlement when the eldest child of the family came, through education at school, to have his eyes opened to the wider world of knowledge. Here at school in the village, Mircea Varvara learnt to write on a slate and to read the beloved ABC primer under the guidance of two competent teachers, who both taught two classes simultaneously, each one with alternative activities. On Saturdays all those four forms were taught together in one class with the pupils sitting three to a bench.

As a war-time school-leaver from a rural area, Mircea Varvara, when he graduated from primary school in 1945, had to choose between remaining at home or going on to secondary school. In this he needed his parents’ approval. Seeing that the boy liked books and wanted to learn, his mother Anica was insistent with her husband that their boy should follow an academic path. How right she was! The same happened in due course with the other children, both boys and girls, who all benefitted from being enlightened by an academic education.

Today, Dealul Morii, within whose educational framework the future pupil, student and man evolved, has become the most beautiful village in the Valley of Berheci. The well-organised settlement with its attractive buildings and its well-laid out network of roads, nestles in its natural surroundings, with farms and fruit trees and village gardens. Stately limes guard the main highway and perfume with the smell of their blossom the beautiful nights and summer days, attracting the diligent bees and generously offering them their nectar and their pollen, which are miraculously converted into honey, propolis and wax.

2. At school and further on

The most suitable and appropriate school for what his parents destined Mircea to become was to be found at Bârlad. The boy did not refuse, having as his models his teachers, the notary and the priest. The school was near the famous Normal School of Bârlad whose buildings were destroyed in the final part of the Second World War and never rebuilt.

Mircea studied lessons at the school which was renamed the Pedagogical School after the Reforms of the year 1948.

To stay on at school beyond the minimum school leaving age was a very brave effort between the years 1945 and 1952. To the toll in human lives and the economic losses caused by war, the terms of the Armistice, foreign occupation and the Paris Peace Conference of 1947, were added the extra burdens of the period of transition from one socio-political régime to another, the terrible drought of the year 1947, and the pressures of the Communist East on all spheres of activity, economic, administrative, cultural, scientific and, above all, political. The Varvara family managed by dint of hard work and devotion to keep the children protected under the sheltering arm of an academic education and the enlightening influence of books.

At the strict boarding school at Bârlad, Mircea Varvara learnt useful lessons, experiencing life in a heterogeneous collective, hardening himself as he faced up to adversity. Brought up at home in the spirit of work and with rural common sense, he respected and strictly adhered to the scholars’ traditional codes and customs, and
exercised restraint, avoiding the temptations of youth. While the pupils of the boarding school still fought amongst each other from time to time, he advocated patience and tolerance, never quarrelling with anybody. He was convinced that he must gain much knowledge in order to become “at some time or other, somebody, somewhere”.

At his side was his best friend and colleague, Valeriu Zanoschi, a model of work and good preparation. Together they formed a well-known pair both in the field of learning and as examples of civilized behaviour, extending beyond the years of their student days until Valeriu was prematurely taken from us in 1996.

Mr. Varvara himself remembers with gratitude and admiration the teachers at Bărlad who skilfully and unselfishly added brick by brick to the building of some solid intellectual and moral civic structures, as only the Pedagogical Schools knew how to and were still capable of doing.

To name some of the teachers:

**Vasile Velicu**, Biology, a mentor who cultivated his pupils’ passion for the study of plants, animals, and the human body.

**Iancu Maxim**, Geography, the published author, after 25 years of tenacious labour, of the much valued work: “The Ethnogenesis of the Romanian People”, which, to date, 2007, has run to four editions. This venerable teacher is now 96 years old and still has an appetite for work.

Mircea Varvara graduated from the Pedagogical School in 1952, receiving a Merit in his Diploma. He then taught at the school in Lăleşti, in the Commune of Puești, Vaslui County, where he worked as a supply teacher. And it was as such that he was then transferred, at his own request, to the school at Lozinca-Bacău. All this took place in the school year 1952-1953.

Mircea aspired to gain a higher qualification, and accompanied by his esteemed friend Valeriu Zanoschi, he was admitted for the entrance examination for the Faculty of Natural Sciences – Chemistry at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University at Iassy. On the basis of his previous Merit Diploma, he was allowed in without having to take the exam. There followed four years of academic study (1953-1957), courses, practical work, field work and serious exams (6 per semester plus oral exams).

The remarkable and much regretted Professor of General Biology, Petre Șuster (1896-1954) made the following remark when he wrote his comments in the students’ note-books: “Mircea Varvara has known and answered like a Lion, and Valeriu Zanoschi like a Para-Lion”.

In those four years of intense, interesting, pleasant and profound studies, he had the privilege to be guided by people with many years’ didactical experience, who as long-term disciples were also learning with him, and as teachers were his mentors and preceptors. These included Mihai Constantineanu, Petre Șuster, Constantin Papp, Olgă Necrasov, Mr. and Mrs. Petru and Matilda Jitariu, the brothers Sergiu and Dumitru Cărăuşu, Zigman Feider, Filimon Cârdei, Constantin Dobrescu, etc. He valued his masters’ teaching, their methodology and behaviour and during these years of study, he himself absorbed the subject matter and the science they taught him.

He was a teenager and young man who liked to assimilate knowledge, and during the summer holidays he lent a hand to the family on the farm. He steadfastly gained understanding of the biological and chemical sciences, and graduated from the Faculty passing the State Examination and gaining a Diploma of Merit, a result of which he was appointed to a position as teacher at the Theoretical Lyceum in Podul Turcului, in Bacău County in 1957. A year later the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University invited him to join the ranks of the teaching staff.
It was while he was at Podul Turcului that he decided that the right time had come to tie the matrimonial knot. He and Elena were married on 12th October 1958. And it was thus that he arrived at Iassy a married man.

3. University work and the fruits thereof.

On the 15th of October 1958, as dictated by the effort necessary at this stage in his life, Mircea Varvara bravely set out on the realization of his professional career, working at the University. He started as chief of a laboratory at the Faculty of Biology-Geography-Geology, which later, in 1990, became the Faculty of Biology. Here he carried on with his activities right up to the age of 70 years old, when he retired. All these years he benefitted from very good health, the result of a moderate life-style, and total abstinence from cigarette-smoking and the drinking of alcohol.

With patience and optimism he gradually rose through a succession of university posts, gaining in turn the following degrees and positions:

1958-1960 Chief of Laboratory Faculty of Biology, Iassy University
1960-1966 Teaching Assistant Pedagogical Institute Iassy for three years while also continuing at the Faculty of Biology at Iassy University
1966-1990 Lecturer (Ph.D.) Faculty of Biology, Iassy University
1990-1994 Reader (Ph.D.) Faculty of Biology, Iassy University
1994-2002 Professor (Ph.D.) Faculty of Biology, Iassy University

1972 Doctor of Biology
2002 Emeritus Professor at the University by the Decision of the Senate of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iassy, no. 4879, July 2002.
2004 Diploma of Excellency granted for special merit by the Faculty of Biology, University of Iassy, for strengthening, developing and raising the prestige of the Entomological School of the University of Iassy.
2005 Associate University Professor (Ph.D.)

In summary, the work of Mircea Varvara, Professor, Biologist and Entomologist can be described in the following concrete and pragmatic terms:

- Constant endeavour to further his own development in the field of his specialisation: doctorate, perfections, the experience of academic exchanges, correspondience.
- Constant and tireless involvement in the training of others (Master’s Degrees, Teachers of Biology, Candidates for PhDs).
- Involvement in basic and applied biological research concretized in scientific papers published either on his own or in collaboration with colleagues.
- The elaboration of papers on practical field work, regarding tackling modes of research and the protection of the natural environment.
- Engagement in social and humanitarian activities useful to students and to people in general.

Thus, in the year 1964, he was admitted to prepare for a higher academic qualification, a Doctorate, under the aegis of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University at
Iassy. His supervisor was Emeritus Professor Doctor Docent, Mihai I. Constantineanu, a well-known and respected entomologist both in Romania and abroad.

On the 2nd of December 1972, after eight years of assiduous work, he presented his doctoral thesis, the title of which was "Pest insects of the plum tree in Iași County and their natural enemies (entomophagous insects)", to the Commission and before a capacity audience in lecture room B2 of the Faculty of Biology. Numerous first year students, whom the candidate was teaching the practical Zoology of Invertebrates, attended.

The Examination Board for the doctorate, a prestigious one, was composed of:
- The President: University Professor, Doctor, Docent Sergiu Cărăuşu
- The official Reviewers: University Professor, Doctor, Docent Constantin Bogoiescu of the University of Bucharest; University Professor, Doctor, Docent Mihai Peiu of the Institute of Land Management, Iassy; University Reader Dr. Gheorghe Boguleanu of the Institute of Land Management, Bucharest.

The thesis drafted by lecturer Mircea Varvara represented a study, with multiple ecological aspects, of the partnership of the plum tree and its entomocoenosis, from the orchards of plum trees in the Moldavian Central Plateau (Iasi County).

The main quantitative results of the thesis regarding the pest-insects/predators/parasites, were cited by Professor Mihai Ionescu, entomologist, Corresponding Member of the Romanian Academy in a scientific article published in “Science Progresses” no. 4/1973, p.183-189.

In his professional work, Mr. Mircea Varvara manifested particular diligence, seriousness and responsibility and worked with perseverance. He had confidence in people and especially in students who listened to his explanations in the practical work and in the courses that he taught, courses that were held both for them and for the teachers who came to prepare for teaching diplomas in the preliminary stages of University education.

Directly or indirectly, he required his students, and those aspiring to perfection, not to merely scratch the surface, but to dig down deep to the hidden roots in their search for the causes of phenomena and the relationships of things. For many years in the course of his teaching activities he undertook field-work in different ecosystems. The principles of zoology, entomology, and ecology were all applied and thus an important link for the use, application and consolidation of knowledge from laboratories and lecture theatres at one end of the spectrum to the wider world of nature at the other, was created.

The wealth and diversity of his teaching activities resulted in synthesis as shown in the following:

The course of his normal teaching covered the performance of practical laboratory work with students in 14 subjects, Just a few of those disciplines are here enumerated: Invertebrate Zoology, General Entomology, Agricultural Entomology, Palaeontology, Principles of Ecology, General Ecology and the Protection of the Environment.

This difficult situation did not discourage him. On the contrary it motivated him in the search for explanations for the links between the processes of adaptation, survival and reproduction of the species.

His work on text books for both course and practical work was of great value and benefit to students: he produced and published the following manuals:
- A Course of Geology-Stratigraphy and Elements of Palaeontology (1993)
Mihai Bejinaru

- Practical Works of Ecology (2001)
- General Biology and Ecology (2001) for students studying from a distance.

For over 35 years he guided the biology students of Iassy in their practical biological work in the territory of Moldavia. He also took them on field trips to Germany for three weeks in 1982 and 1987, and to France in 1993. In addition, in 1982 and 1985, he took German students from the University of Jena on fieldwork trips to study aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems in Romania.

For an appreciable number of years he guided the curriculum, from the fourth year onwards, for pupils from the General Schools and the Lyceums of Iassy.

He supervised the publication under licence of 84 works covering the theory and, more particularly, the practical work of Zoological and Ecological subjects including agricultural, forest and steppe-ecosystems.

He collaborated on the production of 34 texts on the nature of the methodology of Biological science, a requisite component of Part 1 of the Teacher Training qualification in the preliminary, pre-university Diploma, taken by teachers from the Moldavian communes and towns. For all this he needed a high degree of competence as a scientist and as a teacher, good health to put up with all the moving around, and the ability to cope with stress.

Educated in the spirit of the Pedagogical School with its expectation of high levels of educational attainment and progression on to university, Professor Mircea Varvara was a member of 40 commissions of inspection. He evaluated the teaching qualities and organisational skills of aspiring Biology teachers, deciding whether they merited to receive a first degree in the teaching of Biology and whether they had duly attended their courses and taken part in discussions; He evaluated and weighed up the results of the candidates and objectively decided whether they had demonstrated the qualities of a good teacher.

He drafted and taught whole and part-time courses for 13 subjects for students at undergraduate level: courses for resident students, and for extra-mural degrees. He also supervised courses for candidates for Master’s Degrees. These courses included Invertebrate Zoology, General Ecology, Historic Geology and Palaeontology (Extra-mural); General Ecology, General Ecology and the Protection of the Environment, Principles of Ecology (courses for full-time students); Pests of cereals and technical plants, The Effects of Pollution on Animal Organisms (Courses for Candidates for MSc. Degrees).

In his capacity as Lecturer and Reader, Professor Mircea Varvara taught composite courses for final degrees, for secondary diplomas in Education and for the activity of perfection. In these he focussed on problems of speciation, evolution and adaptation. Examples of these were: The evolution of the digestive, respiratory, circulatory, and excretory systems and of the nervous system in invertebrate animals, with reference to problems in Biology characterized by synthesis, clarity and connecting explanations.

For over 45 years Professor Mircea Varvara’s scientific activity has been focused on several lines: personal scientific activity; scientific activity with students and with teachers of Biology; scientific activity of specialization and of realization of scientific contracts; scientific activity participating in Symposia and International Congresses; activity on doctoral Commissions.

Personal scientific activity has evolved in two directions focusing on the taxonomic and the ecological.
In the ecological direction he has tackled as a priority aspects of the ecology of insects in the zoogeographical region of Moldavia. For example, he has researched and specified the phenology, the food consumption, the behaviour, the prolificacy of the following species in the climatic conditions of Iassy: *Melasoma populi, M. tremulae, Malacosoma neustria, Aporia crataegi, Lymantria dispar, Coccinella septempunctata, Neurotoma nemoralis*. On the basis of the wealth of material collected, he specified the complex of parasites of the stages of egg, larva, and chrysalis in the species of harmful Lepidoptera (*Aporia crataegi, Yponomeuta padellus, Euproctis chrysorrhoea, Lymantria dispar, Malacosoma neustria*) in the ecosystem of the plum tree orchards of Central and Northern Moldavia.

The richest field of activity concerning different ecological aspects, and the one which has resulted in the most published material, has been carried out upon the *Carabidae* (Coleoptera) family, from the terrestrial, natural and agricultural ecosystems of Moldavia. He specified the diversity, distribution, phenology, dynamics, abundance, dominance, etc. of some species of Carabidae from the forest associations of Querco-Carpinete, Carpino-Fagete, Abieto-Fagete, as well as from natural meadows, apple tree orchards, agricultural crops (winter wheat, maize, potatoes, sugar beet) on the basis of the material collected from different Moldavian localities in the course of many years.

He published over 100 scientific papers, the great majority being drafted in the English language by the author himself. On the basis of the authentic scientific material collected from different ecosystems, he also drafted 62 contracts and scientific grants, for 35 (56%) of which he was the sole author.

In his scientific research, Professor Mircea Varvara took a keen interest that his papers should be backed up by a wealth of natural data, and he manifested a particular care in the drafting of papers and in synthesising the presentation of the results in front of the specialists and the biologists.


Some of his scientific results are cited in several doctoral theses from Romania, or in papers in other countries abroad (for example, Thiere Hance, 1998), or in specialist scientific journals.

In the line of his scientific work, he made trips abroad for information, specialisation, documentation and exchanges of experience, in the course of which the means of communication was mainly in English. We cite: The Institute of Ecology, Warsaw, 1974 and 1991; The Institute of Zoology, Freiburg, 1986 and 1995.

In appreciation of his contribution to the Science of Entomology, biologists Traian Ceuca (University of Cluj) and Irinel Popescu (University of Iassy) have dedicated to the name of Mr. Varvara the following species: *Entomobielzia (Moldovobielzia) varvarai n. sp.* (1985), (Diplopoda) and respectively *Torymus varvarai* (Chalcidoidea, Torymidae, 2005). (Insecta).

On account of his scientific competence Professor Mircea Varvara was named by the doctoral Commissions as official reviewer for the analysis and evaluation of the contents of doctoral theses. He was also a member of numerous Commissions for the examination of candidates for the degree of Doctorate.
Taking into account his long and fruitful didactic and scientific activity in the domains of Invertebrate Zoology, Entomology and General Ecology, exerted to the limits of his powers and capacities, the Senate of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, at the proposal of the Scientific Council of the Faculty of Biology, headed by university Professor Dr. Gheorghe Mustăţă (Dean), conferred on him the title of Emeritus Professor, by the Decision No. 4879/July 2002, the year in which superannuation led him to retire from teaching activity.


Besides all of this, between the years 1958 and 2004, Professor Mircea Varvara, both as a young man and in more advanced age, has carried on a rich and varied array of communal and public activities. These consisted of the organisation and guidance of the productive practice of students (1970-1978); the organisation of the trade-union group (1967-1970); president of the Syndical Section of Biology (1986-1989); vice-president of the Red Cross Commission (1980-1987); member of commissions for analysis of courses, commissions for the promotion of teaching staff (lecturers, readers, professors). Since 1990 he has been a member of the Drafting Committee of the Scientific Annals of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University with the task of verifying the translation of scientific papers into English.

4. The Psycho- Moral Profile of the University

Accepting the Hippocratic typology of tempers, completed with the extro- and introversion description of Powers, we have reasons to appreciate that Mr. Varvara is an introverted, overwhelmed by the qualities of extroversion, a consequence of the profession practiced along the life ( with people, for people and nature ).

Taking into account the neuro-physiological aspects manifested by Mircea Varvara, general line of conduct, details of temper and the temperamental interferences (as pure types of temperament), I have found him, as a matter of fact, a phlegmatic with sanguine influences.

In difficult moments, faced with embarrassments, he remains as it is his temper, that is: prudent and reserved, calm and tactful, discreet, indulgent and patient, gentle and discreet, empathetic, co-operating, attentive with the troubles of those in need.

He is a combinative type, according to creative general aptitudes (intelligence, imagination, observant, good memory, practical with applicative inclinations). A stable superior motivator of long standing; highly receptive towards scholar and education (correctly guiding and cultivating), the university has help create Mircea Varvara, an indisputable man of character.

In theoretical and practical activities (with the students and other categories of specialists working in agriculture, viticulture, fruit growing and sylviculture, protection of plants and the combat of pests) he has proved an analytical- synthetic thinker, with the correlative understanding of natural and anthropic biological phenomena. He has a good visual memory and a great openness towards improvement, always confident in the future. He has never felt tired and bored with work.

And Mircea Varvara hobbies and his private life are also extraordinary and extra professional, such as:
- Walking as a morning pleasure 50 minutes for over 40 years, from home to his faculty, and the numerous trips, excursions with particular or professional character;

- Learning, as an autodidact, the English language, something that has brought him great satisfaction in communicating through science with people from abroad, he has friends in England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, France, Germany, Poland, The Republic of Moldavia, the United States of America. He has also presented the results of some papers at International Congress. He has drafted papers directly into English;

- Communicating with people (relatives, colleagues, friends, collaborators, and institutions) by classical correspondence (letters), telephone (fix, mobile), fax, e-mail or drafted papers, setting in motion richness of particular information and of specialties.

Next year (October, 2008) Elena and Mircea Varvara will celebrate their “Golden Wedding Anniversary”. An honourable, stable family, enriched and widened, through, by the births, education and professions of two sons: Varvara Viorel (48 years old), university Professor Ph.D. at “Gh. Asachi” University and Varvara Cătălin (38 years old), Company manager, of two daughters-in-law, Roxana and Beatrice who are both doctors. Their families have given them two granddaughters: Sorana an economist, graduated in the profile faculty from the town of Bern. She is now married and living in Switzerland, and Karina, the clever one, at only the age of two years and 8 months, (2007).

In a previous correspondence (2004), with modesty and full sincerity Mircea Varvara confessed to me briefly: “all my life I have liked to work… I am grateful to chance, fortune, destiny, parents, especially to the work and qualities of my wife and children, to my temperament that have made me a toiler of the long-distance race, tolerant, submitting to the Empire of Hope”. Yes, I say and write it again this is Mircea Varvara!

5. The Place of the University Professor Dr. MIRCEA VARVARA in the Gallery of Iassy Biologists.

Because he has from his very beginnings had the fundamental principles of behaviour of the workers of the sacred Homeland deeply rooted in his personality, both country people and town folk consider him to be one of them.

He has been and remains a biologist, teacher and researcher well-known in Iassy as well as in the whole of Moldavia, for his contribution to the training and perfecting of our pre-university teaching staff, and of numerous generations of students, and to the advancement of the study of Biology in our schools.

For amiability, generosity, team-spirit in research, professional altruism and openness to collective activity, he has been liked without reserve as much by his older colleagues and those of the same generation as him, as by a younger generation aspiring to knowledge about nature and its conservation.

Through contracts and scientific grants of practical importance he has travelled beyond the borders of Moldavia, and has had influence, as a research scientist on young researchers in Transylvania, Oltenia, the Barsei Country and the Republic of Moldavia.

For contemporaries and for posterity, University Professor Mircea Varvara, is seen as the embodiment of reason and seriousness of expectation. For his intellectual endeavour and prolonged physical efforts, for his lack of self-interest and his kindness in his relationships with people, a well-merited place of honour has been reserved for him in the rich gallery of Iasiensian biologists.
This presentation cannot be brought to a close without emphasising the fellowship, the co-operative spirit, the particular understanding of which the relationships with all those who would wish to call him their friend are proof. I myself count myself such a friend and realize the full advantages and the pleasure this friendship has brought me.

At this time of celebration we wish him simply, sincerely, and from the bottom of our hearts “as with his past full of work and health, a future still full of joy!”

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First Degree Teacher Mihai BEJINARU, Câmpul Lung Moldovenesc, 2007