

Professor Elżbieta Lonc, D. Sc. (1951–2017) – *pro memoriam*

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On March 6, 2017, we lost Professor Elżbieta Lonc, D.Sc., Head of Department of Microbial Ecology and Environmental Protection, Institute of Genetics and Microbiology, University of Wrocław, an outstanding scientist, excellent teacher and organizer, truly involved in the development of the Polish parasitology.

Professor Elżbieta Lonc was born in autumn Sunday morning, November 11, 1951 in Kłodzko as the first of four children of Helena and Tadeusz Szymacha. Her mother Helena Szymacha, née

Rozenbajger, settled in the Bardo region together with her family in September 1945 after relocation from Barysz, Buczacz district, Ukraine.

After receiving a maturity certificate in Władysław Jagiello Secondary School in Ząbkowice Śląskie, she began in 1969 biological studies at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of Wrocław, with which she remained associated until the end of her scientific, didactic and organizational activities. Directly after graduating with honors from biological sciences, she enrolled as a PhD student in ecology at the Institute of Microbiology under the supervision of Associate Professor Jadwiga Złotorzycka, D. Sc. In 1977 she defended her doctoral thesis entitled „Participation of some Lumbricidae, Scarabaeidae and Hydrophilidae in the spread of *Taenia saginata* eggs”. In the same year, after obtaining the doctorate degree in natural sciences, she took an internship at the Department of Biology of the Academy of Physical Education in Wrocław. Since 1978 she was working at the Department of General Parasitology of the Wrocław University, first as a senior assistant and then as an assistant professor. In 1989 she was awarded habilitation degree on the basis of habilitation thesis entitled „Phenetic classification of Ricinidae (Phthiraptera: Amblycera)”. She received the position of associate professor at the University in 1993, the scientific title of professor of biological sciences in 1999 and the position of full professor in 2005.

Her commitment to teaching and organizational activities resulted in her serving as the Vice Dean for Teaching Affairs in the Faculty of Natural Sciences (1991–1996) and in the initiative to reorganize fields of natural sciences study in line

with the so-called Bologna Process according to a three-cycle model, taking into account the implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the system of internal quality of education. Professor E. Lonc also served as a member of the University Senate Committees for Scientific Research and Foreign Relations (1994–1996), the Teaching Commission, as its Vice President (1996–1999), and the University Committee for the Celebration of the 300th Anniversary of the Wrocław University (2000–2002). After retirement of Prof. Jadwiga Złotorzycka, D. Sc. she served as the Head of the Department of General Parasitology (1996–2002). She was the originator, initiator and a long-time director (1996–2008) of the Department of Environmental Protection Studies established for the interdisciplinary faculty of *environmental protection*, which was particularly close to her heart. Thanks to the efforts of Professor E. Lonc, the Department of Microbial Ecology and Environmental Protection was established in the structure of the Institute of Genetics and Microbiology in 2007, in which she served as the Head until her death.

Scientific interests of Professor Elżbieta Lonc were characterized by interdisciplinary nature. As a person gifted with extraordinary creative imagination, she embarked on new challenges. They were mainly related to parasitology and environmental microbiology, historical determinants of the development of disciplines and the current problems of biological aspects of protecting the human environment against pathogens and their vectors, as well as environmental and health education. Research undertaken by Professor E. Lonc concerned not only the taxonomy, occurrence and circulation of certain parasites and pathogens of humans and animals (mainly birds and mammals, including livestock), but also effective ways of combating them with environmentally friendly, highly specific entomopathogenic strains and bacterial insecticides based on *Bacillus thuringiensis*, ecoepidemiology using geoinformation systems (GIS), environmental mapping of parasitic and microbiological hazards using GIS techniques.

Academic achievements of Prof. E. Lonc's include several hundred publications, mostly original ones, and dozens of unpublished papers (expert reports, e.g. for the TEMPUS program and, above all, the reports of the University

Accreditation Commission – UKA and the National Accreditation Commission – PKA), a dozen of scripts, textbooks for students, book chapters and monographs. In addition, Prof. E. Lonc edited books and manuals: „Parasitology in Environmental and Health Protection” (2001), „Contemporary Trends in Environmental Education” (2003), „History of the Polish Parasitology in the Years 1945–2000” (2004), „Ecology and Environmental Protection” (2005), „Tourism and Health” (2012), „Vectors and Pathogens – in the Past and Future” (2015). She participated in several dozen national and international conferences. In the Institute of Genetics and Microbiology she was the organizer and co-organizer (with Prof. Anna Okulewicz) of almost twenty Wrocław parasitology conferences, three national conferences entitled „Environmental Protection in University Life Sciences” (1993, 2003, 2013) and, in cooperation with Doctor Gabriela Bugla-Płoskońska, D. Sc., three editions of nationwide conferences on parasitology and microbiology: „Vectors and Pathogens in the Past and in the Future” (2011, 2012, 2014), and also another, scheduled for November 24th this year.

Professor E. Lonc was a highly respected academic teacher dedicated to students who taught many generations of young people. She promoted 8 doctors, was the supervisor of more than 80 masters of biology, microbiology and environmental protection, more than 100 biology and environmental protection licentiates and many diploma dissertations of postgraduate studies on „*The ecological and health education*”, which she conducted in the 1980s. She reviewed several doctoral dissertations, habilitation theses and applications in the professorship.

The consequence of interdisciplinary scientific interests and wide organizational activities of Professor E. Lonc was diversity of scientific and didactic institutions and centers with which she cooperated. During her scientific career she attended an annual research internship at the Department of Ecology and Evolution at Stony Brook University, USA in the 1980s and, in subsequent years, internships at Dutch universities (Groningen and Leiden in 1992, Rotterdam and Utrecht in 1993), and also internships in Marburg (1995, 1996, 1998), Brighton (1995), Brussels (1996), Toledo (1997), Hamburg (1999), Lund (2000), Pasteur Institute in Paris (1994, 1996), Hadasah Medical School in Jerusalem (1992, 1996) and University of Aktau, Kazakhstan (2007).

Cooperation initiated in the 1990s with Prof. Norbert Becker (University of Heidelberg), director of the KABS (Kommunale Aktionsgemeinschaft zur Bekämpfung der Schnakenplage), resulted in a unique university-city program for mosquito control in the agglomeration of Wrocław with the use of microbial insecticides. This year, at the time of the forthcoming 4th scientific and training conference „Vectors and Pathogens in the Past and Future” scheduled for November 24, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the program.

Since 2000 Professor E. Lonc was also a professor of biology/ecology at The Angelus Silesius University of Applied Sciences in Wałbrzych, where acting as the Rector (2008–2016) she represented Lower Silesian Universities of Applied Sciences in the College of Rectors of Wrocław and Opole Universities.

She was a member of the Polish Biometric Society (1984–1994), the American Society for Vector Ecology (1987–1997), the Wrocław Scientific Society (1991–2001), a member of Resort Program Committee in the Ministry of the Environment (1997–2001). Since 1974 she was a member of the Polish Parasitological Society (PTP), Chairwoman of the General Parasitology Section of the PTP Main Board (1987–1990), Vice-president of PTP (1991–2001), Chairwoman and later Vice-chair of the Wrocław PTP Branch, a founding member of the Polish Society for Mosquito Biocontrol, a secretary and member of the *Wiadomości Parazytologiczne* Editorial Board (1987–1990), university coordinator of the first edition of the Lower Silesian Science Festival (1997).

At the Institute of Genetics and Microbiology, Wrocław University, together with Prof. C. Firling, she was the first coordinator of the Summer School of Microbiology, a course called General Microbiology in English for American students of the University of Minnesota Duluth. In the first half of the 1990s, she was the ministerial reviewer of dozens of TEMPUS grants. She was an expert in the Community Initiative INTERREG III A Program Czech Republic-Poland-Panel No. 6. Environment (2005), and a member of the jury in the Procter & Gamble Poland Award Competition (2004, 2005). She was also a member of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Parasitology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1995–2001) and the Committee of Parasitology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1991–2004, 2011–2015). Since 1997 she was

chairing the Team of Environmental Standards Experts at the University Accreditation Commission (UKA), and then she served as an expert (2002–2004) and member (2005–2008) of the State Accreditation Commission (PKA). During that period (2005–2008) she was also the national coordinator of the European NETTLE (Network of European Tertiary Level Education) program on pedagogical preparation of academic teachers, a consultant within the framework of the ministerial system project „National Qualifications Frameworks for Higher Education as a tool to improve the quality of education” (2010–2011).

For outstanding academic, organizational and didactic achievements Professor E. Lonc was honored with the „Diploma for the Best Teacher in the Faculty of Natural Sciences” by her students (1979), and numerous awards from the Rector of the Wrocław University. She was awarded the Gold Cross of Merit (1995) and the Medal of National Education (1997). She was also the beneficiary of the individual awards (2008–2014) and team prizes (2006, 2014) of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. She received Eco-Friendship Laurel in category III: for a person with outstanding contributions to ecology (2009), Distinguished Service Award – Society for Vector Ecology, European Branch (2010) and honorary title of Friend of Children’s University UNIKIDS (2011). She was also the Ambassador of the „Dr. Clown” Foundation. Her long-standing cooperation with the Angelus Silesius University of Applied Sciences in Wałbrzych was honored by the titles of the Personality of the Wałbrzych Region (2011) and Honorary Citizen of Wałbrzych (2016).

For several months, struggling with severe disease, Professor Elżbieta Lonc was involved in research and organizational activities. Of great respect and sympathy for the late Professor E. Lonc may testify participation of several hundred people at the funeral ceremony. Sincere grief was expressed in the farewell speeches of the authorities of the Wrocław University and The Angelus Silesius University of Applied Sciences in Wałbrzych, friends as well as co-workers with the Institute of Genetics and Microbiology.

With great sadness we paid the last tribute to not only a perfect, highly regarded academic teacher and passionate scientist, but also a noble and good person. In the memory of the closest associates Professor Elżbieta Lonc will remain as an elegant, graceful, well-mannered woman and, above all, a

kind person, always willing to share her knowledge and professional and life experience, a friend and a great-hearted woman. We are proud and grateful that we can continue the scientific work of Professor Elżbieta Lonc.

References

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