

## OBITUARY

## Vinko Škarić (1923–2006)



Vinko Škarić was born in Split on October 16, 1923. He finished elementary school (1934) and secondary school (1942) in Split. Since he wanted to enroll in the Music Academy, he also attended secondary music school. This wish was, however, thwarted by World War Two, in which he participated on the antifascist side – in the medical corps (1944–1945). After the war, in the autumn of 1945, he enrolled in the Chemical Technology Department of the Technical Faculty in Zagreb, from which he graduated in 1951. His degree thesis was supervised by Professor Viktor Hahn (1912–1970). After graduating, he got a job with the Petroleum Institute, where he worked as head of the Analytical Distillation Laboratory. He moved to the Rugjer Bošković Institute in 1953 and worked as research assistant until 1957. He earned his doctor's degree at the Faculty of Science and Mathematics (Zagreb) in 1957 with the doctoral thesis *Chemistry and Stereochemistry of Aminoalkylglyoxals*, prepared under the supervision of Professor Krešimir Balenović (1914–2003). He habilitated in 1960 at the Faculty of Technology in Zagreb with the thesis *Structure of Aconite Alkaloids Delcosine and Delsoline and Their Correlation with Lycoctonin*.

He spent two years (1957–1959) as a post-doctoral fellow in the laboratories of the National Research Council in Ottawa (Canada) with L. Marion and a year (1960–1961) at Harvard University with Robert B. Woodward (1917–1979), the Nobel Laureate for chemistry (1965). He returned to the Rugjer Bošković Institute in 1961 where he was appointed head of the Laboratory for Stereochemistry and Natural Compounds. He became senior research fellow in 1970, and also served as the chairman of the Institute's Managing Board (1964–1966), president of the Scientific Council for several terms and director (1966–1974). It is also worth mentioning that he was a member of the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia and president of the parliamentary Committee for Higher Education and Science (1969–1974). He stayed at the Rugjer Bošković Institute until 1993 when, seriously ill, he retired.

He ran the postgraduate course in Organic Chemistry at the Faculty of Science, and since 1963 taught the course entitled *Oligonucleotides and Nucleic Acids*. He supervised 25 master theses and 20 doctoral theses. He was Vice-Chancellor for Science of the University of Zagreb (1988–1991) and chairman of the Coordinating Board of parent bodies of the Association of Croatian Universities (1982–1993).

He was a member of the Croatian Chemical Society (since 1953), Croatian Society of Chemical Engineers and Technologists (since 1955), Association of Harvard Chemists (since 1969), The Royal Society of Chemistry (since 1969), Akademie der Wissenschaften und Literatur-Mainz (since 1972), Schweizerische Chemische Gesellschaft (since 1975), *etc.* He was also a member of the fraternity Brethren of the Croatian Dragon (Dragon of Postira; since 1991), corresponding member (1977–1986) and associate member (1986–1991) of the former Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, and full member (since 1991) of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, where he also served as secretary of the Academy Division of Mathematical, Physical, Chemical and Technical Sciences (1991–1994). He was a member of editorial boards and advisory boards of the journals *Croatica Chemica Acta*,

*Archives for Work Hygiene and Toxicology, Chemistry in Industry, and European Journal of Biochemistry.*

His scientific and research work was done in the field of preparative chemistry and stereochemistry of natural compounds. He studied the structure and properties of aconite alkaloids, on which he also habilitated. At the beginning of his career he investigated the chemistry of porphyrin and chlorophyll, and then studied the little known group of physiologically interesting tetrahydroindazolone acids, aminocyclo-hexane acids and their respective peptides. Using NMR, he determined the conformations of these compounds. He then started research in the field of unusual heterocyclic components of polynucleotides, nucleotides, nucleosides, peptidyl nucleosides, unsaturated nucleosides, and anhydro- and dehydronucleosides. This research is associated with the studies in-

to antiviral, carcinostatic and antibiotic properties of the listed compounds. He collaborated with Pliva for a number of years on preparative modifications of tetracycline antibiotics. He also collaborated with Jean-Marie Lehn, the 1987 Nobel Co-Laureate for chemistry, on the problems relating to synthetic macrocyclic receptors in interactions with nucleobases, nucleotides and analogous compounds. He published about a hundred scientific papers and registered some ten patents in the field of antibiotics, peptides and the related bioactive compounds.

He was awarded the state award for science "Rugjer Bošković" in 1978 and the Life-Achievement Award in 1990.

Vinko Škarić passed away on January 1, 2006 in Zagreb.

*Nenad Trinajstić*