In memoriam Professor Dr Teresa Kowalska (1946–2023)

It is with great sorrow that we report the death of Professor Dr Teresa Kowalska (Institute of Chemistry of the University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland), our Editor-in-Chief, who passed away in February 2023.

Professor Dr Teresa Kowalska was born in Gliwice, Silesia in 1946. Her parents lived in Lwów (now Lviv, Ukraine) and after the II World War were forced to leave their hometown due to the changed political situation, to the so-called “Recovered territories” in Silesia, Poland.

The Kowalski family lived in Chorzów, where Teresa went through all levels of education. In the 1960s, she studied at the Faculty of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry of the Pedagogical University in Katowice, where, in 1968, she obtained a Master’s Degree in chemistry.

She connected her scientific and professional work with the University of Silesia in Katowice, where she went through all levels of her academic career, and 4 years after receiving the diploma, she obtained a PhD degree.

Shortly after a PhD defense, in 1974, she obtained a one-year post-doctoral scholarship from the British Council at the Department of Organic Chemistry of the University of Salford in Great Britain, where she worked under the supervision of Prof. Hans Suschitzky. Having returned from England, she worked as an assistant professor. She received her habilitation degree based on the dissertation A New Thermodynamic Model of the Chromatographic Process and its Applications. The habilitation colloquium took place in 1988 at the Faculty of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin.

She obtained the position of associate professor in 1991. The procedure related to awarding Dr Kowalska the professor title was conducted by the Faculty of Chemistry of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, and ended successfully in 1999. Between 2000 and 2016 Prof. Dr Teresa Kowalska worked as a full professor at the Institute of Chemistry of the University of Silesia.

Her most important scientific achievements include the publication of over 300 scientific papers, most of which appeared in international, peer-reviewed scientific journals from the Philadelphia List. These works, according to the Scopus database, were cited 2,769 times and the Hirsh index is $h = 25$, which proves a very high scientific level of her publications.

The papers mainly focus on the theory and application of chromatography, in particular planar and column liquid chromatography. In numerous works, Prof. Dr Kowalska documents the use of chromatography, especially planar chromatography, and successfully links it with the study of physicochemical phenomena.

For several years, Prof. Dr Teresa Kowalska and her team conducted the research on the application of thin-layer chromatography with densitometric detection and other instrumental analytical techniques to study the oscillatory reactions of selected organic compounds. It was a pioneering research. Recent years of extensive studies also brought the achievements in identification methods of plant material, in particular the construction of the so-called fingerprinting of medicinal plant species or the analysis of foodstuff.

Professor Dr Teresa Kowalska was Editor-in-Chief of the quarterly Acta Chromatographica, the highest-ranked Polish scientific journal in the field of analytical chemistry by the Thomson Reuters scientific information platform. She was also a co-editor and co-author of five scientific monographs published by one of the largest American scientific publishing houses, Taylor & Francis CRC Press. These include Preparative Layer Chromatography (2006), Thin-Layer Chromatography in Chiral Separations and Analysis (2007), Thin Layer Chromatography in Phytochemistry (2008), Chromatographic Techniques in the Forensic Analysis of Designer Drugs (2020), Planar Chromatography – Mass Spectrometry (2020).
Professor Dr Teresa Kowalska was a member of the editorial board of two international scientific journals, Journal of Planar Chromatography and Chromatography Research International.

Professor Dr Kowalska also had great achievements in the didactic field. She promoted 13 doctors in chemistry. She was a reviewer in numerous PhD procedures, including one review in England, 11 in India and 7 in Pakistan. She also participated as a reviewer in 3 habilitation degree procedures.

It is also worth emphasizing Kowalska’s extensive scientific cooperation with foreign centers, primarily in the United States and Belgium, and in the Republic of Serbia with the University of Belgrade (Faculty of Pharmacy, Faculty of Physical Chemistry, Faculty of Chemistry and IHTM), which manifest in numerous multi-author scientific articles created as the result of these collaborations.

Teresa was not only a successful researcher in her professional field, she was also an extremely talented person in other areas which require both high intellect and the quickness of mind. She was fluent in several world languages, and she had a good knowledge of literature, music and fine arts. Kowalska is known as a translator of many literary texts, i.e. some poems by German authors into Polish, or novels translated from English into her native language. She was also fluent in Serbian, which was the result of her several-months stay in Belgrade as a child with her uncle, an employee of the Polish Embassy in that city. She could read Serbian literature in the original and knew the Balkan culture and history very well. When asked if she preferred reading Serbian in Cyrillic or Latin, she briefly replied – ‘I don’t care’!

Teresa also had the ability to listen to her interlocutors. She listened attentively and remembered the details of the stories perfectly, which made each of her interlocutors feel outstanding, and encouraged many to willingly open their hearts to her. This was also visible at chromatographic symposia in Szczaryk, where she chaired for so many years. The uniqueness of these meetings and sessions manifested itself in scientific discussions often inspired by Teresa: you could learn from her attentive listening and the difficult art of asking questions as well as making apt remarks.

The chromatographic research community, professional and scientific public, numerous collaborators, students and her friends are deeply shaken by the knowledge that Prof. Dr Teresa Kowalska left us unexpectedly. Her contribution to the development of this scientific periodical and professional topics is an irreplaceable loss. She was not only a great professional, but also, as a human being, a good friend and a person you could always count on for support.

We are proud that we had the opportunity to collaborate, socialize with and learn from our Teresa, and we have been left with a great hunger for conversations with her, discussions with her participation, or simply being in her company. Teresa, you orphaned us!

Requiescat in pace
MONIKA WAKSMUNDZKA-HAJNOS, MIECZYSŁAW SAJEWICZ and DANICA AGBABA

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