

IN MEMORIAM

Professor László Hargitai (1930 - 1996). *Written by Monika Takacs*

Being a pedagogue and a scientific researcher is not a job or profession but a mission. Professor László Hargitai was a person who thought and lived that way, devoting his life to research work and teaching.

He was born in Bonyhád in 1930, grew up in Budapest and studied at the famous Evangelic Secondary Grammar School in 1948. There he studied the ancient cultures and the Greek and Latin languages as well as physics, chemistry and modern techniques. He became a very well educated man who read widely and was till the last minute of his life open minded and enthusiastic about science, history and culture.

He graduated and obtained his diploma of chemistry at the Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences in Budapest, and began to work as an assistant in the Soil Science Department at Agricultural University in Gödöllő. In 1958, he became an assistant professor at Agricultural Academy in Kesztehely. In 1960, he was appointed as an assistant professor at the Soil Science Department of the Horticultural University Budapest, where he was working till the end of his life, holding the positions of professor and Department Head from 1977 till he retired in 1995. Just before his sudden death he became the Professor Emeritus of the University.

His research work dealt with soil organic matter, particularly the characterization of humic substances. He got his PhD (candidate) degree in 1960, his thesis dealing with the humic substances of the main Hungarian soil types. In 1984 for his research work on organic matter management of natural, agricultural and anthropogenic soils he was awarded his DSc degree. He wrote a total of 330 publications (half of them in foreign languages), including 15 scientific books and book chapters.

He was a brilliant speaker and lecturer, and very popular among the students. He was elected as "Magister Optimus" several times. His other activities characterize how untiring he was in national and international scientific organizations: President of the Soil Chemistry Section of Soil Science Society of Hungarian Agricultural Association; President of the Chemistry Section of the Hungarian National Committee of the International Peat Society; member of the International Soil Science Society and the International Peat Society since 1963, the International Fertilization Centre since 1973 and a charter member of the International Humic Substances Society. He was active at the Humus et Planta and all of the IHSS meetings and served as the Hungarian coordinator of IHSS.

His career was extremely rich: not only for the many scientific results, publications or activities, but also for the gift of his knowledge and enthusiasm, which he gave to students.