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A Tribute to Professor Alexopoulos

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A Tribute to Professor Alexopoulos

This issue of the *Proceedings* began to take form on June 17, 1973, at the University of Massachusetts when many of the former students of Professor Alexopoulos gathered to present him and Mrs. Alexopoulos with a "day of appreciation." The reading of scientific papers written by his students, the banquet that evening, and the preparation of this issue of the *Proceedings* which includes those papers was an honor for all of us because it provided an opportunity to express our appreciation to our warmly admired teacher. That the Board of the Iowa Academy of Science, especially the Editorial Board of the *Proceedings*, saw fit to join the celebration testifies to what we all know: the respect and admiration for Professor Alexopoulos' contributions to mycology and education are recognized by many others besides his former students.

Many Iowans are counted among that wide admiring audience—because Professor Alexopoulos' contributions to higher learning while in Iowa were notable. From 1956 until 1962 he was Professor and Head of Botany of The University of Iowa in Iowa City, and it was there that the first issue of his *Introductory Mycology* appeared—a book now in its second English edition and translated into four other languages. His interest in the Iowa Academy was always obvious. He was forever urging his students at The University of Iowa to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the Academy meetings to gain experience in the presentation of their ideas.

Professor Alexopoulos was born in Chicago in March, 1907, and educated at the University of Illinois—Urbana, where he received a Ph.D. degree in botany (mycology) in 1932. From 1932 to 1935 he taught mycology at the University of Illinois and from 1935 to 1943 biology, bacteriology, and botany at Kent State University. During the Second World War he worked for the U.S. Government in the Amazon Valley of Brazil as a field technician in the rubber development program. In 1944 he joined the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration's (UNRRA) mission to Greece as agricultural rehabilitation officer and deputy director of the division of agriculture and fisheries. When the Greek mission was about to be dissolved, he joined the faculty of Michigan State University to succeed Dr. E. A. Bessey as mycologist and taught mycology at East Lansing from 1947 until he came to The University of Iowa in 1956. In addition to his famous *Introductory Mycology*, he has also coauthored *Algae and Fungi* with H. C. Bold, *Biology of the Myxomycetes* with D. W. Gray, and most recently *The Myxomycetes* with G. W. Martin. Honors have easily come his way. He was awarded a Fulbright Research Fellowship in 1954-55 to study the myxomycetes of Greece and received the Botanical Society of America certificate of merit in 1967. He has held several offices in the Mycological Society of America, including its presidency in 1959, and was president of the Botanical Society of America in 1963. One of his most recent honors came when he attended the First International Mycological Congress in Exeter, England, in September, 1971, at which time he was named the first president of the newly created International Mycological Association. Professor Alexopoulos is also a member of several other professional societies including the British Mycological Society and the Torrey Botanical Club.

Professor Alexopoulos' academic honors are impressive, yet



he is often most remembered by his students for qualities not expressed in degrees or publications. His scholarly standards, prolific scholarly production, and wide academic interests have been inspiring to more than one of us—even after receiving our degrees and moving into the academic world. But it is perhaps his influence as a teacher which we will most remember. His intuition which sensed ability when it was not clearly obvious, his unrelenting pursuit of potential scholars, his exacting scholarly standards, and his patience with the beginning students are only a few of the many attributes which all of us as his students recall well. After all, these characteristics were only the expression of what we most appreciated—a compassionate and generous human being who exacted from most of us more than we thought we had. More than one of us heard him say, "You must harness yourself . . .!"

Professor Alexopoulos has the rare ability to combine the exactingness of scholarship with human compassion. (The combination was always there, even in his first remark to me when I expressed an interest in probing more into the myxomycetes: "Well, you know, you don't *study* the myxos, you *love* them . . .") For this reason it is fitting that the Iowa Academy of Science should publish a *festschrift* compiled by his students in honor of his contributions to academe, and most of all to their personal lives.

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