

## **PROFESSOR PETRE T. FRANGOPOL – A BRIEF, PERSONAL ACCOUNT ON THE LEGACY HE LEFT IN IAȘI**

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More than about a man, this evocation is about some of the ideas, ideals and legacy that will ever define that man. I met Professor Petre T. Frangopol while I was still an undergraduate student, and both our approaches toward one another were short-sentenced, straight, sincere and even blunt. Professor Frangopol was in the incipient phase of developing a new specialization at the Faculty of Physics in Iași, and thus in worried need of young, talented, hard-working people able to take on the challenge, while I was in the pursuit of a dream, namely to do research in biophysics. Apparently, we were both in luck those days. As discussions progressed, I still remember vividly the central question Professor Frangopol kept asking me: "...if you would have a lab, what project will you be able to start at once? What's your plan?" Early on our endeavor, I have also heard for the very first time about notions such as curriculum vitae, quality research based on original ideas and not re-vamped projects imported from other labs, the need to respect intellectual qualities of other people despite personal judgements, the need to compare ourselves with the best in our field, to mention very few. Needless to say, I didn't have much of a clue of what biophysics was about, beyond the scarce literature I was able to access and read in the library. As for the infrastructure needed to propel my 'to be' ideas, it was totally absent. Things one gets for granted nowadays in even a modest lab, as a minimal start-up on a research pursuit (e.g., a decent computer, some measuring devices and essential reagents, etc.), were only present ... in some leaflets and books found in some corridors of the Faculty.

However, Professor Frangopol was overwhelmingly full of grit, optimism and, above all, he exhibited a contagious, almost obsessive desire to succeed where everyone else told him he would fail, namely to start from practically nothing a world-class new laboratory of biophysics, able to produce good papers from original ideas brewed 'in house'. The hours, days, months and then years passed, and out of many excruciating brainstorming meetings, organized and presided by the tough and fully "focused on the ball" Professor Frangopol,

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research ideas surfaced. Small (from Soros Foundation, Iași) followed by large (from International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Austria) grants poured in, students began to attend and later graduate in the Biophysics and Medical Physics specialties from the Faculty of Physics in Iași, scientific papers were being produced and people started to take notice of our presence and results. However, one could not state that at all times the institutional appreciation was positively correlated with the results produced, but now this is a matter of history ... and I leave to more competent and informed people have the last word on this.

Despite all attempts to bend files of history and saying in brief, main facts that will never lose substance are: *i)* Professor Frangopol brilliantly succeeded in building from virtually nothing to internationally recognized results, two brand new academic and research fields at the Faculty of Physics, later to become the Sections of Biophysics and Medical Physics; *ii)* many students, myself included, were extremely lucky and fortunate in meeting the right person (Professor Frangopol) at the right time, and at the beginning of one of the most brave projects to be implemented in the Faculty of Physics; such bravery eventually contaminated all our spirits, and we all started to undergo some *genotype mutations (!)* early in our careers, making us believe that we cannot *afford the luxury* of failing in our pursuit; *iii)* above all, the after-hours education imprinted in our behavior was not only unique at that time and place, but eye- and mind-opening for the subsequent years in our careers: we were to be judged solely by our results and professional performance, and not by whatever objective or subjective motivations or constraints that impeded us from achieving success. In Professor Frangopol words, “only results matter, reasons from not having them interest none”. We, the students were quite young then and truly believed that such principles apply generally in any given institution, and we were all equal in front of our achievements or failures. In other words, we were convinced that at the end of the day each of us was to be scaled commensurate with the successes marked, so some sort of moral principles and meritocracy-based karma were to prevail. Well ... we were then young, and many lessons were learnt over the following years!

With the essential start-up ideas, financial and moral support brought by Professor Frangopol, the scientific output of the biophysics and medical physics started to grow vigorously over the years, allowing us to steadily implement new research ideas and literally build up from ground other brand-new projects, all around revamped infrastructure and new talented young people. In spite of all said above, it still remains an understatement to assess the pivotal role played by Professor Frangopol not only in bringing such new research venues at the Faculty of Physics in Iași, but shaping our characters,

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minds and hearts in a (then) new brave world (for us), in which the only realistic way to become visible and possibly accepted among existing peers was to prove ourselves solely through our results.

The writer Amos Oz said that every person has three names: one given by her/his parents, one given by her/his peers or friends and enemies, and one her/he makes for her(him)self. In my view, the attributes that capture best the third such name Professor Frangopol made for himself, were restless tenacity, patriotism, fighting against all odds and bravery in front of both subjective and objective obstacles. Knowing that no person is gone from among us as long as we keep alive her/his memory, it will remain a personal duty to forever honor and remember Professor's Frangopol influence on my personal career and consolidation of my team and professional dream.

