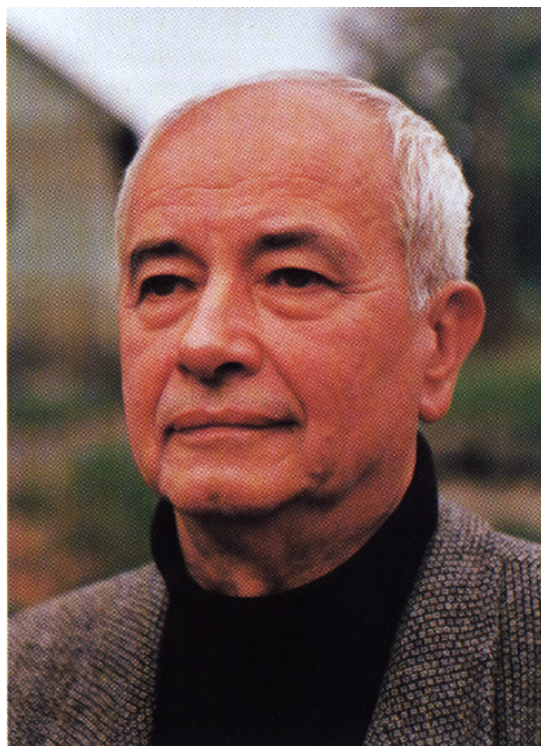


# Jan Krekule

septuagenarian



*Looking at the youthful face and figure of the jubilant, and being aware of his unceasing activities in the scientific, social and sporting fields, one is reluctant to believe that Jan is 70 years old. But not in vain do we use the saying that one is as old as one feels. But Jan is a truly renaissance personality (even if he has a passion for the baroque period) with a very broad education and numerous active interests and abilities, and it is not easy to summarize his many achievements in plant science and his numerous activities in the social, cultural and other fields.*

*He acted as an executive editor of *Biologia Plantarum* in the years 1968 - 1969 but, in spite of performing an excellent job, he was replaced for political reasons. Only in 1991 did he return as a member of the editorial board, a position he still holds today.*

*Although he came from the family of a technical designer in the Škoda factory and lived in Prague, Jan decided to study agronomy at the Agricultural University in Prague. Even during his early studies he developed a deep interest in plant ontogenesis. He defended a diploma thesis on cereal vernalization and, after one-year's practical experience at the Regional Research and Breeding Institute, Jan became a PhD student in the Biological Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. It was this period which de facto determined the course of Jan's whole life, giving him a lasting devotion to plant ontogenesis and morphogenesis. His PhD thesis also was dedicated to vernalization, especially its ecological and physiological aspects. He joined the new Institute of Experimental Botany at its foundation in 1962, where he still remains today, eventually becoming head of the group studying plant development and the regulation of flowering. Flowering was predominantly studied from the point of view of photoperiodism and the regulatory role of plant hormones, and the studies led by Jan involved morphological, physiological and biochemical aspects. Special attention was paid to anatomical changes in the apical meristem during flower initiation, the role of leaves and cotyledons as organs of photoperiodic signal perception and later to the role of phytohormones in flower induction. Possible roles of electric signals in the regulation of flowering were also studied. Making use of his technical skills, Jan even took part in development and construction of special small-volume "climaboxes", in which the model plant used for studies of flowering could be grown under programmed conditions. The original model short-day plant used in the early studies of flowering - a small weed, known as goosefoot (*Chenopodium rubrum* L.) - was later joined by its long-day counterpart, *Chenopodium murale* L. Without any exaggeration, Jan's professional life could be entitled "My life with *Chenopodium*". The studies of the role of phytohormones led then to studies of effects of photoperiod on levels and transport of hormones and of rhythmicity. In addition to his work on flowering, Jan also participated in and made contributions to studies of organ regeneration and other problems of plant biotechnology. He was also the coordinator of the first large Plant Biotechnological Program in our country (1986 - 1992).*

*His achievements in plant science were marked by two Awards of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1982 and 1992. In 1989 he defended his thesis for the Doctor of Science degree, entitled Multicomponental Regulation of Flowering.*

Jan was, and still is, not only an excellent and dedicated scientist, but also a very good and experienced teacher. For many years he delivered lectures on plant development at the Department of Plant Physiology of Charles University and he has supervised numerous diploma and PhD thesis. He received the "docent" (associate professor) title in 1994. He also is a co-author of several textbooks, including: Šebánek, J. (ed.): *Plant Physiology*. - Elsevier, Amsterdam 1992; Procházka, S., Šebánek J. (ed.): *Plant Growth Regulators*. - Academia, Praha 1997; Procházka, S., Macháčková, I., Krekule, J., Šebánek, J. (ed.): *Plant Physiology*. - Academia, Praha 1998. The last mentioned book fulfills a long-standing need for a modern plant physiology textbook in the Czech language and Jan was the main initiator of the project that led to the publication of this much-needed text. Jan is an external member of the Department of Plant Physiology of Charles University and a member of the Councils for Science of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and the Pedagogical Faculty of Charles University and of the Biological Faculty of the Southbohemian University.

During his career Jan has taken part in organization of many international symposia – these include *Plant Growth Regulators* (Liblice 1984), *Physiology and Biochemistry of Auxins in Plants* (Liblice 1987), and several bilateral Czech - German symposia for young scientists.

In spite of the difficulties of the period of communistic system, he always succeeded in keeping good relationships and establishing collaborations with many colleagues abroad. Among these were Mikhail Kh. Chailakhyan and his colleagues (Moscow), Alexander K. Fedorov (Moscow), Georges Bernier, André Havelange and Thomas Gaspar (Liège), Dennis Francis (Cardiff), Alan Longman (Edinburgh), Abraham Halevy and Naftaly Zieslin (Rehovot), Yitzakh Gutterman (Sede Boquer), Tereza Kentzer, Adam Michniewicz and Jan Kopcewicz (Toruń), Ljubinka Culafic (Beograd), Gunther Sembdner (Halle), Edgar Wagner (Freiburg), and Helmuth Schraudolf (Ulm). The numerous Slovak colleagues and friends are not considered to be from abroad. Jan has a deep sympathy and appreciation for African countries and he spent a year in the Research Cocoa Institute in Ghana.

Beside all these activities he has always found time for popularization of science: among other activities, he is a frequent guest on the Czech broadcast program *Meteor* and he is a collaborator and sometimes also author of the traditional Czech botanical journal *Živa*. He has also organized several press conferences on "hot topics" in plant biology.

His wide conceptual approach to science has found its application not only in the functions of Head of the Department of Developmental Physiology (1990 - 1995) and Vice-Director of the Institute of Experimental Botany (1995 - 1997), but also in his work for the broader scientific community, as a Member of the Economical, Editorial and Supervisory Committees and, more recently, of the Council for Sciences of the Academy of Sciences (since 1997).

Beside his scientific activities which, as we have seen, were and remain numerous, Jan has an abiding interest in, and a very broad knowledge of, the historical monuments of our country and its neighbors, especially those of baroque period. He is a convinced, but also a critical, patriot and at the same time he permanently cultivates international relations, both at the personal and cultural levels. He enjoys being in the woods, picking up mushrooms (he always knows where to find some!), he is a good floristic botanist (as well as being a member of the Society of Experimental Plant Biology, he is an active member of the Botanical Society). He is liberal, loyal and tolerant; he has an intense feeling for social justice; and he has a deep sense of and an appreciation for real friendship. He is a brilliant speaker and entertainer with an innate and mischievous sense of humor. He does not leave people close to him in peace - he constantly bombards them with clever new ideas and initiatives. He speaks fluently several languages. It would be difficult indeed to find a subject about which Jan does not know something! Last, but not least, you often may meet him with his four-leg friends: a beautiful golden retriever Bert and/or a friendly dog of an unknown race Ben.

For us, his friend and colleagues, it is quite incomprehensible how Jan is able at his age (sorry, Jan!) to so effectively divide his time among all his various activities and interests; to understand where he finds the energy and time to remain enthusiastic and active and not to look and act like an exhausted workoholic; and to be able to spread so widely his good humor, coupled as it is with that refreshing kind of irony.



CHENOPODIUM RUBRUM

Jan, do not change - we wish you health and happiness for very many years to come! .... and, last but not least, let us present to you to your birthday your beloved plant.

On behalf of all your colleagues and friends from the family of Czech plant physiologists

I. MACHÁČKOVÁ (Praha)