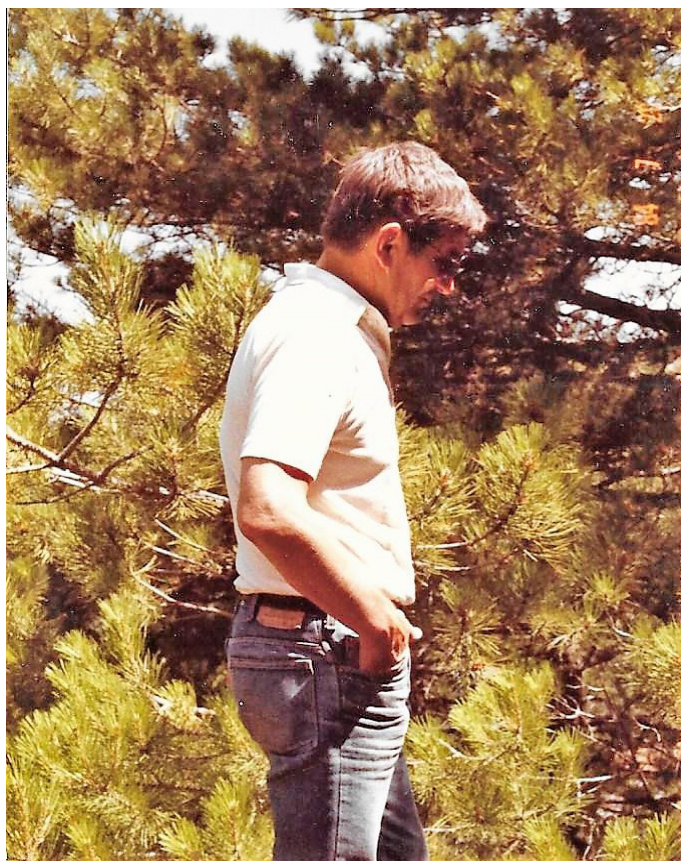


Obituary - Professor Kostas Panetsos (1930-2018)



Professor Kostas Panetsos, 88, passed to his final rest on Saturday December 1, 2018 in Thessaloniki, Greece. Born in Greece in 1930, Professor Panetsos received his Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) in 1953 and his Ph.D. in Plant Genetics from UC Berkeley in 1964. In the same year he was appointed in the newly founded Laboratory of Forest Genetics and Silviculture of the Forest Research Institute of Athens. He served there for 12 years, including a leave of absence in order to carry out a post-doc in Forest Tree Breeding at North Carolina State University. In 1976, he was elected Professor of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding at the School of Forestry and Natural Environment of AUTH where he served until his official retirement in 1997. As Professor Emeritus he continued to be active both professionally and scientifically at the University for almost another 20 years. Professor Panetsos was an elected member of the prestigious Hellenic Agricultural Academy. He was also a Visiting Professor at the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (MAICH) since 1987, has served as an IUFRO officer, and has been a founding member of the AUTH Institute of Solar Technology where he led the biomass section. He was among the

first, in a large University of about 2000 academic staff, to receive competitive research grants in the mid-80s (which he continued to attain well after his retirement), at a period when most Professors relied on the meager fixed annual state research budget. Thus he was instrumental in the formation of the AUTH Research Committee as an independent entity for the management of research funds, a scheme used today by all Greek Universities.

Professor Kostas Panetsos was by all accounts a prominent researcher and educator in the areas of Forest Genetics and Forest Tree Breeding, the founder of the subject in Greece. He taught forest genetics and breeding in hundreds, if not thousands, of undergraduate and graduate students. He wrote four books in Greek on the subject and contributed to international textbooks as well. He supervised 40 doctoral and MSc Theses in AUTH and MAICH and over 100 BSc Theses in AUTH. He initiated the national breeding programs in poplars, firs (Greek and hybrid fir), pines (Aleppo and brutia pine and their interspecific hybrids, black pine), plane trees, and eucalypts. Moreover, he established numerous species trials (pines and firs from all over the world, cedars), provenance tests (mostly

indigenous conifers, but also Douglas Fir), progeny tests, seed orchards and various clonal tests for wood and biomass production. Many of his poplar and plane tree clones are being used today in Greek clonal forestry and in urban forestry as ornamentals. He published over 140 full papers, 65 of which in international journals.

Besides his considerable scientific achievements, Professor Kostas Panetsos will always be remembered for his focus on accuracy and detail, his continual drive towards an in-depth explanation and interpretation of research results, and his persistence on what they mean - besides tree improvement - for the forest itself. He managed not only to have a balance between his teaching and research, but to put these facets of academic life together and develop a research group where teaching through research was the norm. He has been a mentor for many researchers and professors in Greece, practically all the present research groups in the area have been one way or another associated with him. He has been one of my mentors as well. I remember entering his first lecture on forest genetics as a 3rd year student and becoming captivated by his talk. I got fixed into this subject, especially after he became the supervisor of my BSc Thesis. Then, he urged me to pursue graduate studies abroad. "I may lose a good student" he told me, "but I may win a good researcher if you decide to come back". I did. Over the past few years we lived close by in Thessaloniki, but I had not seen him for a while, so in early November, I called him and asked to drop by. I wanted to give him a reprint of a recent paper we had published on one of his favorite subjects: the genetics of island populations; this one was on brutia pine in Cyprus. He was very happy to see the paper and I was moved when I realized that he was delighted to see that we had dedicated the paper to him. After a long and fruitful career, his interest in forest genetics still remained as keen as ever. It turned out to be the last time I saw him; he passed away about three weeks later.

Professor Kostas Panetsos was a scholar, an academic, a researcher, but most of all an inspiring person with an incredible drive that he tried to instill to all his associates. For all of us that knew him and had worked closely with him, it was a real privilege. His inspiration is still here and remains as a beacoming light.

F.A. (Phil) Aravanopoulos

Professor, School of Forestry and Natural Environment, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Email: aravanop@for.auth.gr