



Editorial

In memoriam - Walter Baptist Mors – 1920 – 2008

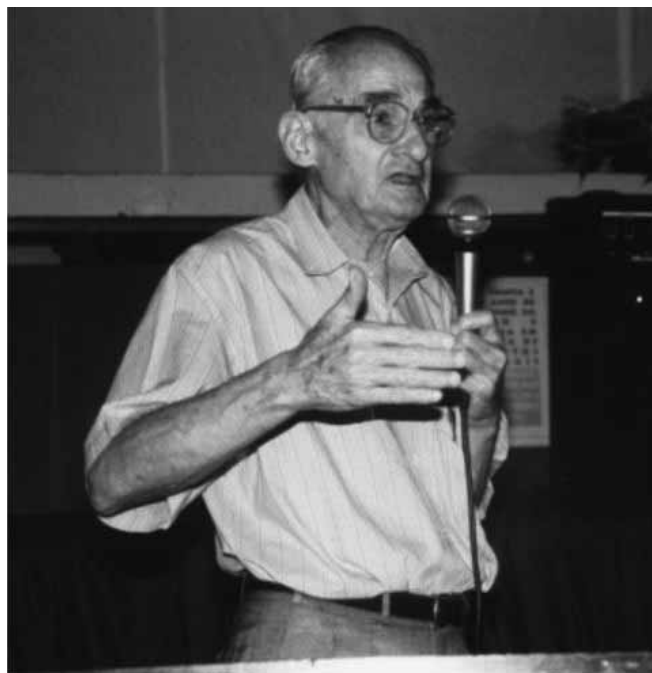
He was born on November 23rd, 1920 in São Paulo, graduated in chemistry in 1942 at the Faculty of Philosophy, Science and Letters at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP). In 1943, he joined the Instituto Agrônomo do Norte, from the Ministry of Agriculture, in Belém, State of Pará. He has acquired a taste for Economic Botany there and he cultivated it throughout life. He was transferred, in 1947, to the Instituto de Química Agrícola (I.Q.A.), in Rio de Janeiro, where Walter B. Mors joined with the purpose of conducting research

with poisonous plants to livestock in the section of Plant Chemistry. He consolidated his affection for natural products chemistry there. His interest in relations between chemistry and systematic botany was at that time too. The next important step was to work, as a grant holder of Fundação Rockefeller, at Wayne State University, in Detroit, with Carl Djerassi, who would be, then forward, a great mover of natural products chemistry in its origins in Brazil. His first contact with biodynamic properties of natural products, a subject that would be later deepened at the University, was

even at the I.Q.A. In 1960, he got the title of Doctor and became a free-Teacher at UFRJ. The extinction of I.Q.A. determined a complete change in the life of Walter Mors and of several of his colleagues. After the extinction of I.Q.A. in 1962, Walter B. Mors, along with other researchers of renown, founded the Centro (Núcleo, now) de Pesquisas de Produtos Naturais (CPPN, current NPPN), located at the Faculty of Pharmacy, from Universidade do Brasil, on the campus of Praia Vermelha. The passage of the group to the University happened due to Paulo da Silva Lacaz - in 1975, the CPPN was transferred to the campus of Ilha do Fundão which became a supplementary organ and had nucleus status, in 1976, being then called Núcleo de Pesquisas de Produtos Naturais. Walter Mors was always dedicated to NPPN, left his mark and a great legacy to the chemistry of natural products there, taking up lines of research that even today inspire searching at NPPN. In collaboration with many colleagues and students a long series of studies on natural products was produced, especially the identification of the 14,15-epoxy-geranylgeraniol, the active substance of the oil of the fruits from Sucupira-branca (*Pterodon pubescens*), which prevents the penetration of cercariae of

Schistosoma into the skin of the final host (published in the Science journal in 1967); the hypoglicemiant principle of the anti-diabetic plant Pedra-ume-caá (*Myrcia uniflora*), and numerous researches on flavonoids, many of them unpublished, and some of them pointed out as evolutionary indicators in the genus they occur.

Walter B. Mors was a pioneer to understand, even in the 50s, the importance of a multidisciplinary vision of research with plants, permeating aspects of Botany, Chemistry



and Pharmacology, uniting chemical, pharmacists, botanists and pharmacologists. Together with Carlos Toledo Rizzini, he wrote the book “Botânica Econômica Brasileira” (with editions in Portuguese, English and German) and also with Carlos Toledo Rizzini and Nuno Alvares Pereira, he is co-author of the book “Medicinal Plants of Brazil”. He joined numerous boards and working groups, including the working group on Underutilized Tropical Plants of Promising Economy Value, of the National Academy of Sciences from the United States. He coordinated the international working group for elaborating the Program Interciência de Recursos

Biológicos and, furthermore, the Advisory Group of the Program “Cultivos Pioneiros” from Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico-CNPq/ Financiadora de Estudos e Projetos - FINEP.

Member of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences since 1957, he was its general-secretary for two periods. He chaired the Associação Brasileira de Química - ABQ and the Federación Latino-Americana de Asociaciones Químicas. His scientific merit has been recognized through the condecoration with the Grand Cross of the National Order of Scientific Merit in September 1994, and the medal Simão Mathias was delivered by the Brazilian Society of Chemistry in 2001.

Retired since 1991, Walter B. Mors continued to collaborate with the NPPN during the many years prior to his death. For his feats in natural products chemistry in Brazil and the creation of research groups in the area, Walter B. Mors is, undoubtedly, at a prominent place in the history of Brazilian science.

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