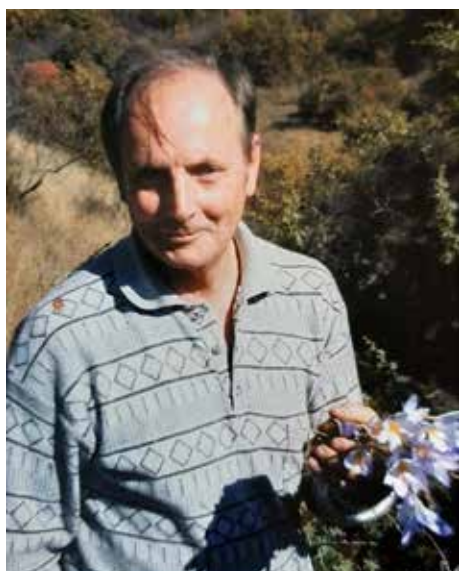


In memoriam **Professor Dr. Novica Randelović (1937-2023)**

Original Article



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Novica Randelović was born on September 15, 1937, in Toplički Kočan, in the municipality of Doljevac near Niš. He attended primary school in his hometown and completed high school and a higher pedagogical school in Niš. In addition to working in a school, he finished his biology studies at the Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics in Skopje in 1969. After completing his undergraduate studies, he enrolled in postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics in Zagreb. He successfully defended his master's thesis in 1974 and completed his doctoral dissertation in 1978. While defending his doctoral dissertation in Zagreb, the Assembly of the Municipality of Doljevac proudly elected him as the president of the Municipality, a position he successfully held until 1982. After numerous life achievements, especially in the field of science, Professor Novica Randelović passed away on January 27, 2023, in Toplički Kočan at the age of 86. He was an exemplary husband, father, and grandfather, a sincere friend, and a distinguished name in biological science in Serbia. For nearly half a century, he dedicated himself to educational and upbringing work, and it could be said that he

continued his scientific research in the field of botany until the last day of his life.

At the beginning of his career, Professor Randelović worked as a Biology and Chemistry teacher in primary school. After completing his master's degree, in 1975, he was appointed as an assistant at the Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics in Priština. Soon after, he was also engaged as a lecturer in the subject of Botany with Ecology at the Faculty of Agriculture in Priština. After obtaining his doctoral degree, he was promoted to the position of associate professor in the subject of Botany with Ecology. Following the establishment of the Technological Faculty in Leskovac, at the University of Niš, he taught the subject of Technological Microbiology. Unfortunately, due to numerous obligations at the Technological Faculty and extensive field research, Professor Randelović ended his employment at the University of Priština in 1984. He devoted himself entirely to teaching at the Technological Faculty, University of Niš, where he was appointed as an associate professor in 1986. In 1990, he was promoted to the position of full professor for the subjects of Microbiology and



Industrial Ecology. Later in his career, he taught the subject of Environmental Microbiology and several other subjects in postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Occupational Safety in Niš.

After the establishment of the Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics at the University of Niš in 2000, Professor Randelović took on the responsibility of Head of the Department of Biology with Ecology and taught lectures in General Microbiology. He retired from the Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics but continued his scientific research and educational work tirelessly even as a retiree. He actively participated in the work of non-governmental organizations, eco-camps, and schools of medicinal plants.

The rich nature of southeastern Serbia strongly attracted his attention, and Professor Randelović chose the mountain Seličevica near Doljevac as the site of his first botanical research. He collected valuable herbarium material and achieved significant floristic and phytocoenological results, which ensured the successful defense of his master's thesis. Ready for further scientific research in order to complete his doctoral dissertation, Professor Randelović, under the guidance of academician Stjepan Horvatić, expanded his research on the plant life of southern Serbia, extending all the way to the border with Macedonia.

He found particular joy in the discovery of new taxa for Serbia, and certain parts of southeastern Serbia, such as the surroundings of Bosilegrad, Preševo, Bujanovac, the Pčinja River valley, and other areas, particularly attracted his attention. Although it can be said that the plant world of Serbia has been well studied, Professor Randelović, together with his collaborators in the mentioned regions, discovered over 50 new species for Serbia. As a member of the Yugoslav team for vegetation mapping, he participated in the preparation of the study "Prodromus of Plant Communities of Kosovo and Metohija" and co-authored the first map of potential vegetation of Yugoslavia. Professor frequently visited herbaria in Belgrade, Skopje, Sofia, and consulted with the leading experts on the flora and vegetation of the Balkan Peninsula. His data on floristic and vegetation discoveries have been published in over 70 scientific papers in relevant domestic and international journals.

Professor Randelović passed on his knowledge and perseverance to his first collaborators, Dr. Vidak Jovanović, Dr. Vlastimir Stamenković, Dr. Spas Sotirov, and Dr. Miodrag Ružić, as well as to his younger followers in the field of science, Dr. Vladimir Randelović, Dr. Bojan Zlatković, and other botanists, guiding them to successfully complete their ongoing research, master's and doctoral theses.

The joint research with Professor Novica will remain not only a fond memory from the field but also a stimulus for further exploration of the plant world in these areas.

In the last decades of his life, Professor Novica Randelović became our leading expert on saffron, specifically the *Crocus* genus on the Balkan Peninsula. In his monograph on saffrons titled "The Genus *Crocus* L. in Serbia" from 1990, he introduced the public to a completely new species of saffron for science, *Crocus rujanensis* Randjel. & D.A. Hill, described from southeastern Serbia and North Macedonia. Later, he expanded the scope of his research to North Macedonia, and another study on the *Crocus* genus, this time focusing on karyology, was published in 2007. Subsequently, he, along with his collaborators, described two more new saffron species, *C. jablanicensis* Randjel. & V. Randjel. and *C. danubiensis* Kernd., Pasche, Randjel. & V. Randjel., while two new saffron species, *C. novicii* V. Randjel. & Miljković and *C. randjeloviciorum* Kernd., Pasche, Harpke & Raca, were dedicated to him by other authors. Professor Novica Randelović will also be remembered as an excellent connoisseur of the diversity, ecology, and medicinal uses of plants. He wrote four manuals on medicinal plants, which served as literature for participants of numerous schools of medicinal plants held in different parts of Serbia.

As a teacher and Professor, dr Novica Randelović will be remembered for his excellent collaboration with those he imparted his knowledge to. Students from the Faculty of Technology in Leskovac, the Faculty of Occupational Safety, and the Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics in Niš often sought his opinion, assistance in field research, or mentorship in their work, which he gladly provided. However, one school will hold a special place in memory - the South Serbian Botanical School, which emerged spontaneously in the pleasant atmosphere of the botanical library and herbarium in Doljevac, alongside the unquestionably valuable results of their research and Professor Novica Randelović as the most experienced botanist in southern Serbia. The name of Professor Novica Randelović will be remembered for his numerous presentations at scientific conferences, but it will always be associated with the organization of the Symposium on the Flora of Southeastern Serbia and neighboring regions. What characterized all 14 Symposia held so far was their excellent organization, for which we owe special thanks to Professor Novica Randelović, an active member of the executive committee in the Organizing and Editorial Board, contributing to the success and participant satisfaction of all previous Symposia.

Knowledge, sincerity, and sociability are virtues
by which we will always remember Professor

Novica Ranđelović. It was a great honor to know
such a person.

