

Sérgio Olavo Pinto da Costa (1930-2023)



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Sérgio Olavo Pinto da Costa, one of the founders of the Microorganism Genetics field in Brazil, was born in Campinas on November 20, 1930. Together with other researchers, such as João Lucio de Azevedo, Darcy Fontoura de Almeida, Isaac Roitman, Elisa Penido, and, later, Edmar Chartone, Sérgio Olavo worked tirelessly to implement and disseminate the principles of molecular and bacterial genetics, including some of the first laboratory studies on plasmids and transposons in Brazil. He is the author of the reference book, *Genética Molecular e de Microrganismos* which contributed to the formation of a generation of students and researchers in this field. His entry to academia began in 1958 at the *Universidade Federal do Paraná* and the *Instituto de Biologia e Pesquisas Tecnológicas do Paraná*. His career continued in the Department of Biochemistry at the *Instituto de Química da Universidade de São Paulo*, and later, in the Department of Biology at the *Instituto de Biociências* and the Department of Microbiology at the *Instituto de Ciências Biomédicas*, where he founded and directed the Microorganism Genetics Laboratory for more than 30 years. During this period, he also exercised, in partnership with Catarina Takahashi and Yatiyo Yonenaga, the presidency of the *Sociedade Brasileira de Genética* (1993 and 1994), a period marked by the promotion of educational activities focused on students and young scientists in various subareas of Genetics. His restless spirit led him to travel across the country to teach science that so fascinated him. In the early 1980s, for example, Sérgio Olavo was in Recife, in the companies of João Lúcio and Juan Carrau, to teach the Fundamentals of Molecular Ge-

netics and Microorganisms to graduates. After his retirement, Sérgio Olavo continued participating as a professor and advisor in the postgraduate course in biotechnology at the *Universidade de Caxias do Sul* and in public health at the *Universidade Católica de Santos*.

Between 1982 and 2000, Sérgio Olavo was a visiting professor at the University of Bayreuth and *University of Freiburg in Germany*. In the midst of his professional activities, he was also a member of the executive committee of the *International Genetics Federation* (1993-1994) and the first National Technical Commission on Biotechnology of the Ministry of Science and Technology. He also participated in the advisory committee and directed the Brazilian Argentine School of Biotechnology (1995-1999). During his fruitful career, he received several honors, including “Professor Emeritus” at the *Faculdade de Medicina de Jundiaí* (1978), Lafi Prize for Basic Sciences Applied to Medicine (1979), Jaboti Prize (honorable mention, 1987). He was also honored for services rendered to the *Sociedade Brasileira de Microbiologia* (2001), to the *Sociedade Brasileira de Genética* (2010) and, in 2009, he was awarded the Development Prize of the *Faculdade de Medicina de Jundiaí*. Additionally, he became a full member of the *Academia Brasileira de Ciências* and laureate of the National Order of Scientific Merit (2010) and Grand Cross (2018).

At ninety years of life and more than sixty in his career, Sérgio Olavo still found the will and strength to launch another book, *O Homem Microbiano*, which represented the synthesis of an academic career marked by curiosity and restlessness in the face of

scientific advances in the area of molecular genetics of microorganisms.

Sérgio Olavo excelled in the roles of researcher, educator, and author who inspired so many. His joyful spirit and thoughtful personality captivated everyone. In addition to books, articles, supervised theses, graduate students, and scientific partnerships, Sérgio Olavo leaves an example of life and principles characterized by honesty, dedication, and commitment to work, but marked by joviality, *joie de vivre*, and the pleasure of living with friends. On March 14, 2023,

Sérgio Olavo died in São Paulo from multiple organ failure at 93 years of age. He leaves a wife (Lourdes), two children (Mauro and Zeca), a granddaughter, and hundreds of admirers for his enchanting and charismatic personality.

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