

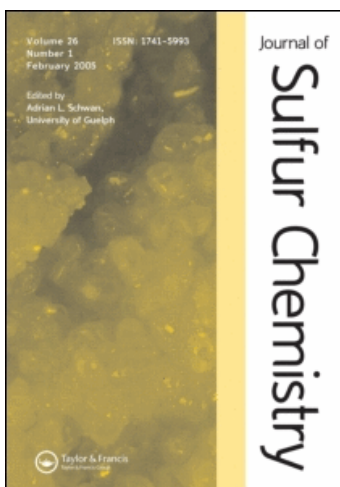
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### Professor Giuseppe (Pino) Capozzi in memoriam

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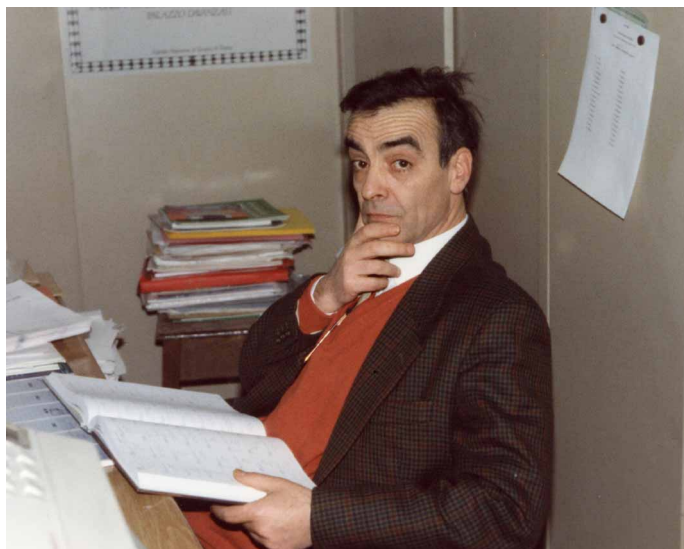
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## OBITUARY

### Professor Giuseppe (Pino) Capozzi in memoriam



Prof. Giuseppe Capozzi, Pino to all his friends, was born in Apulia, Bari (Italy), on 1 January 1941 (cap41 was the password he always used for his PC and all the instruments in his labs) and passed away on 23 January 2008 at the age of 67. Pino Capozzi grew up in Bari, where he graduated in 1960, after which he moved to Bologna where he attended university, studying Industrial Chemistry.

He got the 'Laurea' in Bologna in 1966, where he remained until 1968 as 'assistente' in the research group of Prof. Angelo Mangini, with Prof. Giorgio Modena as supervisor. Prof. Mangini and Prof. Modena are actually considered two of the most relevant organic chemists in Italy after the Second World War, and certainly were the Italian fathers of the Organic Chemistry of Sulfur.

In 1968, Pino Capozzi moved with Prof. Giorgio Modena to Padova, starting his academic career, first as 'tecnico diplomato', then as 'capo ricerca' of the Italian National Research Council (CNR). From 1970 to 1980 he spent a couple of years at two foreign universities: the Hall-Atwater Laboratory of Chemistry, Wesleyan University, Middletown, USA, in 1971, and the Department of Organic Chemistry, University of Groningen, The Netherlands, in 1974. It was during these years that his scientific character and attitude had crucial development.

Naturally curious about reaction mechanisms, he was involved in the study of the reactivity of several electrophilic sulfur species. He was in the team that demonstrated the formation of a thiirenium ion during the addition of sulfur electrophiles to alkynes and how this mechanism is sensitive to substituents and conditions (1). For these purposes he developed the chemistry of sulfonium salts with weak nucleophilic anionic counterparts, like methyl(bismethylthio)sulfonium tetrafluoroborate, and demonstrated its synthetic utility (2). This method of considering a chemical transformation remained characteristic of his scientific profile throughout his long career, including the last part of his production, when sulfur mediated stereoselective syntheses became the main research topic.

In 1980 he received a full professorship position in Organic Chemistry at the University of Messina, Sicily. In this new position he started his independent research, keeping Organic Sulfur Chemistry as the red strip that linked almost his entire scientific production. He also had to participate in significant lecturing and tutoring activity and, as always happened during his entire career, he gained great success among students who found his courses attractive and gratifying.

In 1984 Pino Capozzi moved again, leaving Messina for the University of Florence, as full Professor of Organic Chemistry at the Faculty of Pharmacy, where he remained until his retirement in 2001. These were the years of his scientific maturity and involvement in the Italian and International Organic Chemistry community. In Florence he worked in the Department of Organic Chemistry 'Ugo Schiff', where he fostered his research group, and where we came to know him.

During these years he was involved in the development of Organic Chemistry at different levels. Locally, he became President of the 'Laurea' in Chimica e Tecnologia Farmaceutiche and Delegate of the Faculty of Pharmacy for International Relationships, and he also coordinated Chemical Sciences courses for PhD students. He was the Chief of the Department of Organic Chemistry from 1996 to 2001, challenging the transfer of the Department from its storied location, downtown Florence, to a new building in the Scientific Campus in Sesto Fiorentino, near Florence.

As an active member of the Italian Chemical Society he was the National Director of the Members' Office, was involved in the organising committee of the 'Corbella' Organic Chemistry Summer School in Gargnano and in 1994, he was the Chairman of the Organic Chemistry Division Meeting.

He was a member of the scientific committee of the Ischia Advanced School of Organic Chemistry in 1999 and 2000 and, from 1994 to 2001, a member of the International Committee of the Symposium on the Organic Chemistry of Sulfur (ISOCS) and Chairman of ISOCS-18, held in 1998 in Florence.

Despite all these, and many other activities, chemistry always remained his main interest and, together, we developed the chemistry of mixed sulfur-silicon and sulfur-tin compounds (3), the application of several electrophilic sulfur species (4), the use of  $\alpha$ -acyl thiones as electron-poor dienes in hetero Diels Alder reactions (5) and sulfur-mediated carbohydrate chemistry (6).

His scientific production was impressive: 130 publications in peer reviewed international journals, one patent and many talks as invited speaker.

In 2001, although still young as an academic, after working in two foreign and four different Italian universities as well as at the CNR, regrettably an impractical opportunity nowadays in Italy, he decided to retire and dedicate himself full time to his family, who had remained in Padova during all the years he spent in Messina and in Florence.

Pino Capozzi was a kind and reserved man who was appreciated by the Italian and International Organic Chemistry communities. For people like us, who had the opportunity and the good fortune to work with him, he generously and continuously engaged himself in our formation and scientific education. He was always kind and patient with students, whom he liked helping during 'dangerous' manipulations in the lab. Two main aspects of his character made our collaboration and working experience extremely positive. First of all, his curiosity regarding all aspects of chemistry and its application; on many occasions he prompted us to diversify our research and we

remember very well when, roughly 15 years ago, with a little bottle containing a gold complex in his hand, he asked, 'Why don't we start developing new chemistry with gold?' As a matter of fact, when in the group, we had the chance to set out a new reaction or a new reagent, it was a duty of the authors to validate the new idea since Pino Capozzi was already thinking of something else. He never underestimated the scientific input we gave him and enthusiastically accepted application of sulfur chemistry to biphenyls or carbohydrates. A second and probably more important aspect of Capozzi's personality was his total personal involvement in problems of the Faculty, the Department, as well as the scientific community. He never complained, and when someone or something disturbed him he smoked a cigarette, drank a coffee and was ready to re-start.

He was in his office when we arrived in the morning and we left him there upon returning home, late in the evening. For Pino Capozzi, this was absolutely normal since he was a member of a scientific community charged with teaching, developing and improving Organic Chemistry.

We are sure he will be missed not only by his colleagues and former students but also by the world-wide Organic Sulfur Chemistry community.

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