

**In Memoriam
Ivan Kraeun
(1956-1998)**



Like a bridge over troubled waters, our dearest friend and colleague, Ivica Kraeun, was continually stretching himself in an effort to bring into harmony his multifaceted professional career and personal life.

Unfortunately the strain became too intense and the bridge, composed of the most delicate and most complexly intertwined spiritual tissue, collapsed on a seemingly peaceful and sunny Sunday of April 26, 1998, when Ivica could not evade the encounter with the Faceless Harvester – most unexpectedly and prematurely. His family lost a husband and father, and our School of Medicine was suddenly deprived of one of its most productive members.

Ivica was a man of a penetrating and witty mind, charming and entertaining in approach to others, extremely diligent in pursuing his professional assignments and opportunities, and, true to the star under which he was born, enduring and persevering in pursuing his scientific goals.

He acquired his first research experience and education during the seven years (1977-1983) at the Section of Neuroanatomy, under the supervision of Professor Ivica Kostovia. However, he eventually decided that, instead of serving the one great God (Human Brain), it would be much more exciting to adore the pantheon of small Goddesses (molecules involved in normal and altered development of the nervous system), and his favorite angels became gangliosides – a class of multipurpose molecular devices with still poorly understood functions in the development of the adult brain. Therefore, in 1983 he moved from the Department of Anatomy to Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, where he established a modern neurochemical laboratory. He engaged a group of young and bright researchers and initiated collaborative studies with several leading scientists in the field: Professor Harald Roessner in Stuttgart, Professor Konrad Sandhoff in Bonn, Professor Robert Yu in Richmond, Professor Johannes Müthing in Bielefeld, and Professor Volkmar Gieselmann in Goettingen. It was obvious that Ivica could exclaim “I have a dream” – and his dream was to become the leading representative of the Croatian neuroscience in the field of neurochemistry and glycobiology. Dreams are powerful but ever receding motivating forces, a skeptic may say; however, it seems that Ivica was well within the reach of his dreams at the moment of his untimely death.

He was a person with great and ever expanding energy and entrepreneurship that manifested in the spirally enlarging circle of his activities. During his brief but highly successful career, Ivica published a number of research articles and other publications, represented the moving force of several domestic and international research projects, and participated in the organization of five symposia and seminars. He was an active member of several Boards at the School of Medicine, deeply involved in both graduate and postgraduate teaching of medical biochemistry, neurochemistry, cell biology, and basic neuroscience. With his death, the Editorial Board of the *Croatian Medical Journal*, as well as the Advisory Board of *Neurologia Croatica* lost a valuable member. He was also the first executive coordinator of the Croatian Institute for Brain Research, as well as the Croatian representative in the EUREKA Program COST for Neuroscience in the European Community, and the Croatian representative in the Royal Society (London) for Neurochemistry International. Moreover, he was a member of the European study group for lysosomal diseases, the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Kinderheilkunde, the Gesellschaft für biologische Chemie, FEBS, the International Union of

Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and the New York Academy of Sciences. Ivica received several distinguished awards for his scientific work and achievements, e.g., the Alexander von Humboldt Award (1987) and the Nikola Tesla Award (1988).

He initiated a whole network of international research collaboration by beginning the study of gangliosides in anencephaly with Professor Heinz Egge and Dr Jasna Peter-Katalinia (Germany), the study of muscle glycosphingolipids in Alzheimer's disease and Down's syndrome with Professor Johannes Müthing (Germany), the study of arylsulphatase A in neuropsychiatric patients with Professor Eduard Paschke (Austria), the study of TGF effects on ganglioside metabolism in retinal neurons with Professor Henri Dreyfus (France), immunocytochemical study of human brain gangliosides with Professor Robert Yu (Virginia, USA), and the study of restriction fragment length polymorphism (RFLP) in neuropsychiatric patients with Professor C. van Bockhoven (Belgium). In addition to all that, he was a director of the private research center KVARK – Center for Mental Health.

With the death of Ivica Kraeun, Croatian neuroscience lost one of its most prominent representatives. His friends and colleagues from the Zagreb University School of Medicine will permanently recognize the importance of his work and mourn his loss, as his students will remember him as an inspiring teacher. He will be deeply missed by his family and by all those privileged to have known this extraordinary man.

Miloš Judaš and Ivica Kostovia