

In memoriam

Ksenija Horvatić-Baldasar, PhD, retired associate professor

(29 September 1929 – 7 May 2019)



On 7 May 2019, Ksenija Horvatić-Baldasar, a long-time staff member of the Chair of Mathematics of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture, died in her 90th year.

Ksenija Horvatić was born in Sarajevo, where her father was a teacher of statics and descriptive geometry at the Technical School. Upon completion of the primary school in Sarajevo she attended general-programme secondary school in Split and graduated in 1949, after a short delay due to her stay in El Shatt in Egypt as a Dalmatian refugee in the WWII. In 1949, she began to study mathematics at the Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, and in the spring of 1954, she graduated with first class honours. Already that autumn she was appointed – under a usual procedure after WWII – to a post of a teacher of mathematics and physics at the Second Male General-Programme Secondary School in Zagreb.

On 1 August 1955, she was employed as a teaching assistant at the Chair of Descriptive Geometry at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture. After several re-appointments to the same position, in 1962 she became first order assistant. Her scientific career differs from typical today's career development, when it is understood that graduates immediately pursue a doctorate and earn their PhD within several years. In the autumn of 1962, her request to enrol in the third degree of study, which was a master-of-science study programme in mathematics, was granted by the Council of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture. She earned her MSc degree in 1966 when she defended her thesis titled Polar spaces with special reference to spheres (advisor Professor Vilko Niče, PhD).

Not many people are aware of the fact that she spent the academic year 1967-1968 at the University of Athens, Georgia, USA, where her research focused on the axiomatic approach to geometry and contemporary approach to algebraic structures and their application in geometry.

After she returned to Croatia, first she was entrusted with a task of reading lectures and in 1971, she was appointed lecturer in Descriptive Geometry. On 28 December 1983, she defended her doctoral dissertation titled Investigation into semiplanes of order 10 and constructions of a new biplane of order 14 (advisor Professor Zvonimir Janko, PhD). Her dissertation dealt with the area of finite geometries, which experienced rapid development in the 1980s.

After that she was appointed assistant professor and then associate professor at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture, where she worked until she retired on 30 September 1994.

Ksenija Horvatić-Baldasar published thirteen scientific papers (mostly co-authored by Ida Matulić-Bedenić and Erika Kramer) in the area of finite geometries. Interestingly enough, she published several papers after she had retired, her last paper was published in 2003.

When Ksenija left the Chair, descriptive geometry began to disappear from the Faculty, at least in its traditional form as it was taught until then, because it was just her and

her two colleagues, Gizela Šarmati-Pavlić and Pavao Keglević, who were teaching Descriptive Geometry to all students in the first semester of the first year of study. The three of them were conducting 28 groups of exercises with occasional help from external associates. Quite often they would conduct exercises simultaneously in three classrooms, so after having given introductory guidelines to students, they would go from student to student in all the three classrooms to assist them in their drafting. Even after Ksenija retired, she did not stop working. Having realized that her colleagues could use her help in teaching and in spite of her trouble with her hip joint, she continued teaching as external associate for a year or two. Also, in that period, Ksenija and Ivanka Babić co-authored a textbook titled Descriptive geometry (1977).

Although her colleagues thought of her as a person who would take a tough stand, her students and colleagues who were teaching descriptive geometry with her have fond memories of her and describe her as a person who liked teaching enormously and whose priority was the welfare of her students, hence she was dubbed „student mother“.

Even after she stopped teaching at the Chair completely, on Mondays she was joining us for regular coffee meetings at the Chair, which are held both for the active and retired staff of the Chair.

Rest in peace, Ksenija Horvatić-Baldasar.

Zagreb, 2 July 2019

Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture