



In memoriam

**Jozef K. A. van Boven
(1915–1997)**

On Monday 7 April 1997, IUSSI lost one of her *éminences grises* with the passing away of professor Jozef “Joep” van Boven in his flat in Kortrijk, western Belgium.

Jozef van Boven was born on 19 May 1915 in Roermond, southeastern Netherlands, as the youngest child in a family with one sister and five brothers. From his early childhood, he was overwhelmed by the rich animal life he met during his long daily excursions in the fields. After having completed highschool, he entered the catholic seminary in Roermond, where he got his priest ordination on 10 April 1943. Priesthood brought him in contact with the Jesuit fathers Wasmann and Schmitz, both well-known myrmecologists. The war, however, soon forced the young priest to a temporary life in hiding, of which coincidence brought him to the university city of Leuven, Belgium, where he came in touch with Jezuit father Albert Raignier, also a renowned myrmecologist. From his diocese in the Netherlands, he got permission to enrol at the university of Leuven as a student of biology. Here, the professional contact with the ant world started. For his main research on the taxonomy and biology of the Dorylinae, he performed extensive field work in the “Belgian Congo” of that time. In 1957, he obtained his PhD and in the same year became professor of zoology at the Catholic University of Leuven.

Photograph taken on 21 September 1984 when Professor van Boven (right) is awarded the honorary membership of the French section of IUSSI by former section president Dr. R. Darchen.

The taxonomy of the Dorylinae remained his main field of expertise with annual expeditions to Africa, and several tens of articles published in this area. In addition, also the ants of Belgium and the Netherlands were subject of research, and led to the publication in 1976 of the very valuable book, in Dutch, with the key of the Belgian ant fauna.

During his academic career in Leuven, Professor van Boven taught entomology as well as an introductory course on social insect behaviour to hundreds of students. He was an extraordinary talented teacher, who understood the art to grip the audience – his classes were even attended by students that did not have to take his courses, but that were just fascinated by his way of teaching!

As a Dutchman, he kept in touch with the Museum of Natural History in Maastricht, where he was curator of the Wasmann collection from 1963 until 1973. When he retired in 1984, he split his own extensive entomological collection in three parts: the research collection with army ants (with the largest collection in the world of doryline queens) went to the royal museum of Central Africa in Tervuren near Brussels, the general ant collection moved to the natural history museum in Maastricht where it joined the Wasmann collection, while the general insect collection remained in the laboratory of entomology at Leuven.

On the occasion of his retirement in September 1984, the first joint meeting of the French and British IUSI-sections was organized in Diepenbeek, Belgium. During this event, he became the second honorary member of the French section after P.-P. Grassé. After retiring, he moved to Kortrijk in Western Belgium, where he resumed his priest activities. Although his research work had come to an end, he remained a most loyal and interested participant at IUSI congresses until 1991, when a severe fall on his way to church resulted in a long and slow recovery period in hospital. His health became more fragile since, but his spirit remained strong as ever. He was extremely proud when the editorial office of *Insectes Sociaux* moved to Leuven in 1990, where it was housed in the laboratory he started at the beginning of his academic career.

To all who had the privilege to know him, the memory to Jozef van Boven will remain as an extremely charming and modest personality, a most respected colleague and wonderful friend.

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