

Happy 100th birthday - Maria Matilde Principi

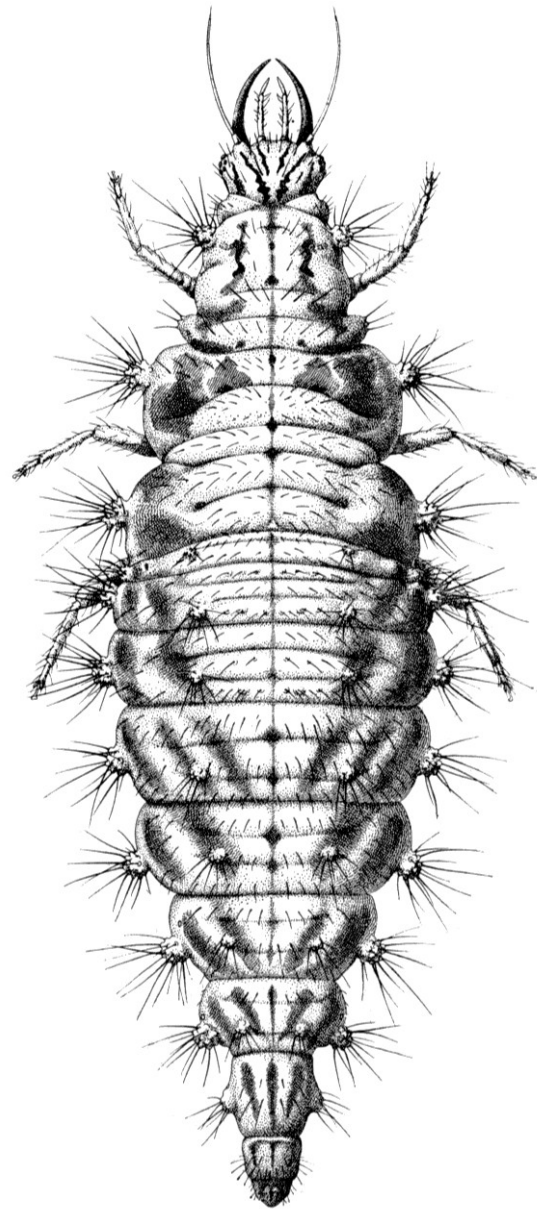
On 4 May, Professor Maria Matilde Principi celebrated her one hundredth birthday serenely at home, with complete clarity of mind and relatively good health. Professor Emeritus of *Alma Mater Studiorum* University of Bologna, she was visited by the Rector, the President and Secretary of the Italian Academy of Entomology, professors and lecturers in entomology at the University, retired collaborators and colleagues and disciple neuropterologists. This list reflects her work as professor, academic, scholar, director of Bologna's former "Guido Grandi" Institute of Entomology and the teacher and mentor of young researchers.

Very few researchers are able to profoundly influence their field of study. Maria Matilde Principi did so, albeit within a very narrow branch of knowledge and in the minuscule community of those studying Neuroptera. But she also played a major role at management level in Italy, for example, by promoting the introduction of integrated pest control into the country. But it is not her scientific merits we want to remember today.

A centenarian's memory can delve into years today inaccessible to most of us. Her memories give a voice to events otherwise relegated to silent documents. Her testimony enables us to enter into harmony with our roots, well beyond the limits of our age. To still be able to discuss and converse with Professor Principi is a rare privilege. And if it is no longer possible, as it once was, to discuss the latest scientific developments and our future research with her on a "technical" level, then we can still be encouraged and fortified by her inextinguishable passion for research. How could we not be thrilled and moved listening to her tales - her amazement at the discovery of the first adult lacewing parasitoid with the larva coming out of the abdomen of the victim which often survives; the long days observing the larvae of the *Italo-chrysa* which she discovered to be an obligate myrmecophile species; the painstaking observations on the biology of numerous Neuroptera species. And then, her descriptions of people whose names we know only on paper and which, through her, come to life. And through all this, an ever-present ethic which, yes, sometimes had to accept compromises with the reality of the difficult academic world, but which was always the guiding light behind her choices as a person and as a researcher.

Dear Professor, thank you!

Roberto A. Pantaleoni



Chrysopa viridana Schneider - third instar larva.

Picture from: PRINCIPI M. M., 1954.- Contributi allo studio dei Neurotteri italiani. XI. *Chrysopa viridana* Schn.- *Bollettino dell'Istituto di Entomologia della Università degli Studi di Bologna*, 20: 359-376.