New Jersey News

Dr. Reed Funk, Rutgers Turfgrass Breeder Passes

It is with deep sadness that I announce the passing of Dr. C. Reed Funk. Reed passed away the morning of Thursday, October 4 after a brief battle with pneumonia. He was 84 years old.

Reed joined the faculty at the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station in 1961 and was a pioneer in the field of turfgrass breeding. Throughout his illustrious career that spanned over four decades, he is credited with the development of hundreds of cool-season turfgrass cultivars with dramatic improvements in pest and stress tolerance. Many of his germplasm releases, such as 'Manhattan' perennial ryegrass and 'Rebel' tall fescue, are considered landmark cultivars and have served as a foundation for many of the new turf-type cultivars used throughout the world today. His tremendous intellect and keen sense of observation lead to many significant discoveries including the development of the first successful method of breeding Kentucky bluegrass by means of intraspecific hybridization, and the discovery that endophytic fungi can impart increased tolerance to major insect pests and enhanced performance for turfgrasses growing under environmental stress. Reed's diverse germplasm collection and enhancement programs have revolutionized the turfgrass sod and seed industries throughout the world.

At the age of 75 he became the George Hammell Cook Emeritus Professor at Rutgers University and founded the non-profit charitable organization, Improving Perennial Plants for Food and Bioenergy (IPPFBE). The IPPFBE mission is the scientific selection and improvement of underutilized perennial plant species for the production of food, timber, and energy and the preservation and enhancement of soil for the benefit of the entire world. Reed's dream was to eradicate world hunger.

In 1996, Reed embarked on an ambitious perennial tree crops breeding project at Rutgers, setting his sights on using plant breeding to develop highly nutritious and sustainable tree crops able to be grown on marginal land. Later, he expanded this project to Utah and developed a non-profit foundation dedicated to breeding tree crops adapted to the Intermountain West region of the United States. Both of these projects are prospering today because of Reed's vision, unmatched work ethic, and commitment to excellence. Reed was a mentor to dozens of students, faculty and staff and a friend to everyone in the Rutgers and Turfgrass Com-

munity. He will be sorely missed.

Even with his extensive education, experience, and long list of impressive accomplishments, his family will remember him most for the Christ- like example he set. His generosity, humility, honesty, modesty, kindness, hospitality, and integrity were unparalleled. He had a tremendous sense of humor and contagious smile. We can never express our appreciation for his love, patience and kindness that we have witnessed these last few years as he has treated his sweetheart, our mother, with the dignity she deserved during her ongoing battle with Alzheimer's.

He is survived by his wife, Donna, and their children: Bonnie (Jeff) Adams (Somerset, N.J.), David (Tamara) Funk (Richmond, UT) and Carol Jean (Brian) Petersen, (Tremonton, UT) and his siblings: Anna Wheeler (Chandler, AZ), Helen (Ken) Cutler (Provo, UT), Mary Lou Cordon (Ogden, UT), Ramona (Ken) Turner (Richmond, UT), Clarence (Joan) Funk (San Diego, CA). He adored and took great pride in his 10 grandchildren and soon to be 8 great-grandchildren.

Reed dedicated his life to making the world a better place and succeeded far beyond anyone's expectations. He is deeply loved and will be greatly missed.

Condolences may be sent to the family at the funeral home website (http://www.allenmortuaries.net/obituaries/C-Funk/). In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Improving Perennial Plants for Food and Bioenergy, Inc. (IPPFBE), Funk's non-profit group, on the IPPFBE website (http://www.ippfbe.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31&Itemid=70).

A very nice video of Reed has been place on the Rutgers Center for Turfgrass Science's Website (http://turf.rutgers.edu/). It is a brief interview of Reed (made in 2009 for the NJ Turfgrass EXPO) where he talks about growing up in Utah and his experiences as a turfgrass breeder over his 40+ year career at Rutgers. It's a must see for anyone who knew and loved this incredibly gifted and talented man.

Outstanding Fruit Grower Award Recipients

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1988	J. Wilson Hughes*
1989	Bob Best, Sr.
1990	Joe Battaglia *
1991	John Rigolizzo, Sr.
1992	Bob Schober *
1993	Doug Zee
1994	W. Howard Heritage*
1995	Al Caggiano
1996	Myron Hurff
1997	Pam and Gary Mount
1998	Fred Smith *
1999	Dennis Donio
2000	Genie DeCou
2001	Dan Haynicz
2002	George Melick
2003	Pete Demarest
2004	Evans Neale
2005	Milton "Bud" Reuter Jr.
2006	Ken Wightman
2007	Santo John Maccherone
2008	Joyce and Richard Mood
2009	Ed Gaventa
2010	Doug Zee Jr.
2011	Lewis DeEugenio Jr. MD
2012	John Hauser

* Member is deceased

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