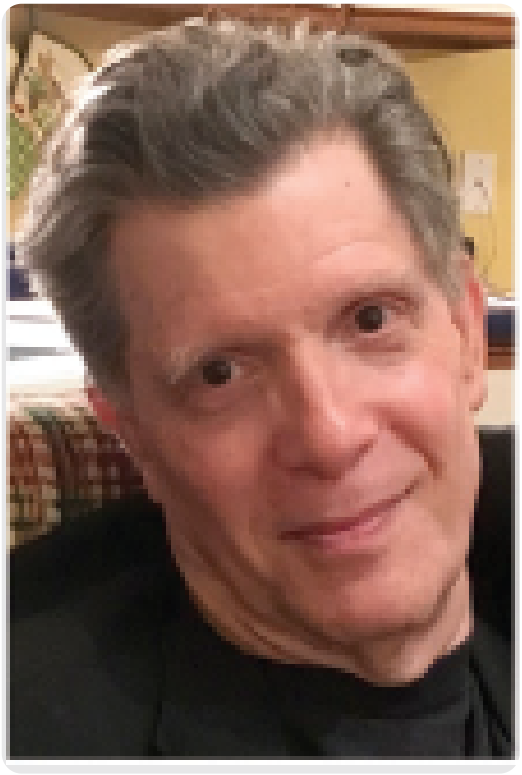
Science Societies

In memoriam

October 27, 2021

Marc Cohn



Dr. Marc Alan Cohn, a 49-year member of ASA and CSSA and Emeritus Professor in the Plant Pathology and Crop Science Department at Louisiana State University, passed away on 19 June 2021. Cohn “retired” from his position at LSU in 2017 but remained actively engaged as an Emeritus/Adjunct Professor. He continued to teach his favorite class (Professional Development), worked on scientific publications, and mentored students.

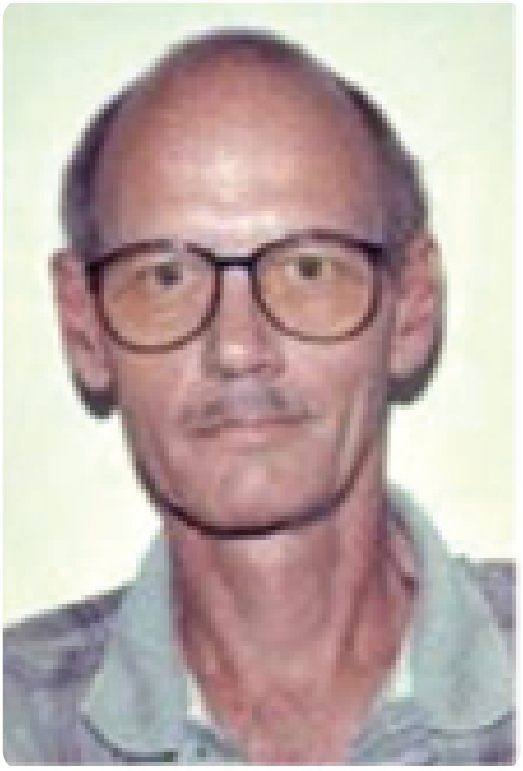
Cohn was active in many scientific societies, especially the Southern Section of the American Society of Plant Biologists where he continued in his role of Financial Oversight/Accountability Officer. Known as Dr. Jazz, Cohn developed and presented his jazz radio podcast *Gifts and Messages* on WHYR in Baton Rouge until 10 Oct. 2020 when the final podcast, “Last Dance,” aired.

Cohn will be sorely missed in the tightly knit seed biology community. His numerous and impactful contributions to our understanding of seed dormancy all stemmed from his enthusiasm and passion for the topic. He always had something new and exciting to report, which drew many to attend his talks. His insights, often delivered with wit and piercing honesty, fueled the research of many, and his scientific integrity created a solid foundation for all to build upon. In recognition of Cohn’s contributions to seed science research, he was awarded the prestigious CSSA Seed Science Award in 2007.

Cohn’s passion, honesty, integrity, and high standards were never more evident than during his tenure as editor of *Seed Science Research* where manuscripts had to pass

his keen eye (and sometimes brutally honest critique) and exacting editing. Everyone who knew him will miss seeing and hearing from the man of 1,000 questions with always just one more to ask.

G. Wade Hurt



Gilbert Wade Hurt, a 33-year member of SSSA, passed away 13 Aug. 2021 in Gainesville, FL at the age of 76. He received a B.S. degree in Soil Science from Mississippi State University in 1968 and served in the Air Force stationed in Japan where he met his wife Yukie. He was predeceased by his daughter Marie and is survived by Yukie, son John, and two grandchildren.

In 1971, Hurt began his career with the USDA Soil Conservation Service (now USDA-NRCS) starting as a soil mapper and eventually becoming the state soil scientist of Florida. He also served as NRCS's national leader for hydric soils from 1996 to 2007, culminating with his service as chair of the National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils.

Hurt retired from federal service in 2007 and accepted an appointment with the University of Florida's Soil and Water Sciences Department where he guest-lectured, taught classes on hydric (wetland) soils, and served on graduate student committees until 2020.

He produced more than 160 extension bulletins, refereed journal articles, meeting abstracts, and soil survey reports among others. While most widely known for his work with hydric soils, Hurt also made significant contributions in the areas of geographic information systems, pesticide application rates for different soils, and nutrient (mainly P) management on farms. He received numerous awards throughout his career, including the Professional Achievement Award from the Soil and Water Conservation Society (Florida Chapter) and the Professional Service Award from SSSA.

Field Indicators of Hydric Soils of the United States is Hurt's most widely recognized professional contribution. It's a major achievement in soil science that greatly improved wetland protection and management in the U.S. In the 1980s, Hurt and co-workers conceptualized the basic processes needed to identify wetland soils and initiated research to improve the accuracy of wetland delineations in Florida. In 1990, the USDA assembled a team of university faculty and federal agency staff to expand the work led by Hurt in Florida for nationwide application. Hurt participated in numerous field investigations across the country, compiling field indicators for virtually all hydric soils in the U.S.

—submitted by Mike Vepraskas, Jacob Berkowitz, and Randy Brown

Frederick F. Ernst

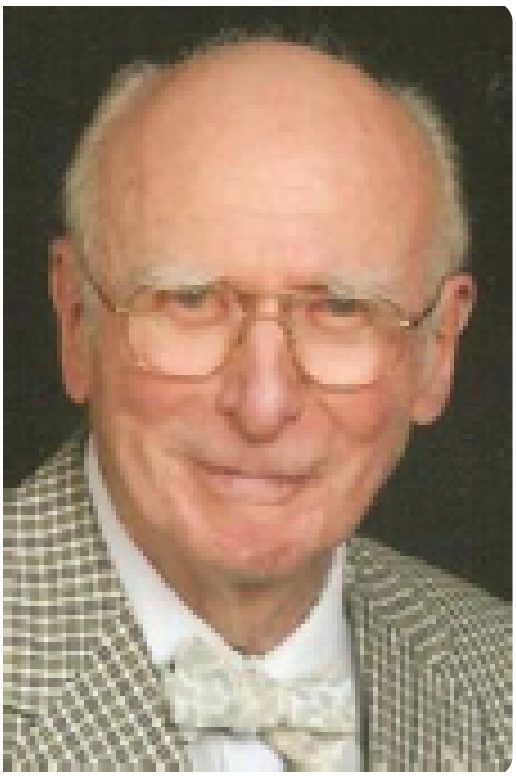
Frederick F. Ernst, a member of SSSA for 38 years, passed away on 19 Aug. 2021 in Riverside, CA. He was born in Paso Robles, CA on 14 Apr. 1948. He graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and then received his master's degree at Purdue University. Being a true Californian, he headed back home after graduation to teach soil science at Cal Poly for several years. He earned his doctorate at the University of California–Riverside in soil science and worked for the rest of his career as a research scientist for the USDA-ARS.

Ernst was widely respected for his design and fabrication of lab and field research devices. He mentored many graduate students from around the world and had an open-door policy for those students who were a long way from home. He loved going to garage sales and swap meets to find "bargains" to fix up and give away. He also collected wood-working equipment and used it to make beautiful canes, jewelry, weaving implements—all made from California grown trees and bushes. His enjoyment was in making something beautiful from downed wood and giving it away. Ernst was also an avid fisherman and was a grasshopper specialist on trout streams. He would use nymphs and flies where required, but preferred live grasshoppers. He was an active member of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Riverside and sang in their choir for many years.

Ernst is survived by his brother, Paul Ernst of Paso Robles, CA; sister Kathryn and brother-in-law Jim Dooley of Edgewood, WA; and sister Carol Ernst of Edgewood, WA.

He also leaves behind numerous nephews and nieces. Ernst will be missed—his monologues on any subject, his incredible patience when working with wood, and his amazing generosity to anyone he came in contact with.

Sherret Spaulding Chase



Sherret Spaulding Chase, a member of ASA for 74 years and CSSA for 67, died 7 June 2021 in Ashokan, NY. He was born 30 June 1918 in Toledo, OH.

In March 2020, Dr. Chase was awarded by Iowa State University's (ISU) College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and its Doubled Haploid Facility, the first-ever Award for Sustained Excellence for his work in developing the doubled haploid method (DHM) in plant breeding. The method enables one to obtain inbreds in two rather than six to eight generations, accelerating the development of inbred lines as well as the breeding process and genetic gains. He was also awarded in May 2020 the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science by Northern Illinois University for his work in developing the DHM and for his legacy of scientific work in maize research and production.

Chase completed his undergraduate degree in 1939 at Yale and his M.S. and Ph.D. at Cornell University. While in graduate school, he was called to military service in the Army Air Corps on 7 Dec. 1942, completing three years of service.

His first teaching position was Assistant Professor and later Associate Professor at ISU. It was here where he developed the DHM. In 1953, he began working for DeKalb Agricultural Association where he further developed his DHM and used it as a practical tool for plant breeding. While there, he developed the first successful commercial maize hybrid using doubled haploids. In 1966, he was awarded the Bullard and the Cabot Fellowships at Harvard University where he continued his studies of tree breeding, genetics, and reproductive forest tree biology. He accepted a position as Professor in 1968 in the Biology Department at the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Oswego where he taught genetics, cytogenetics, and economic botany. He resigned in 1981 and later worked for the International Plant Research Institute in San Carlos, CA. In 1983, he began working for DNA Plant Technology Corporation in Cinnaminson, NJ where he remained until retiring in September 1987.

Chase is predeceased by his wife of 69 years Catherine Ross Compton Chase (2012), his daughter-in-law Susan Ruth Page Chase (1998), and his son-in-law Jeffrey Blair Peters (2019). He is survived by his five children and eight grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

More people articles

Back to issue

Back to home
