Science Societies

In memoriam

By Thomas Devine, Clarence J. Peterson

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Thomas Devine



Tom Devine

Dr. Thomas Edward Devine, CSSA and ASA Fellow and member (more than 57 years), died on 7 July 2022. He was born in the Bronx, New York on 2 Nov. 1937, received a B.S. from Fordham University, an M.S. from Pennsylvania State University, and a Ph.D. from Iowa State University. He served his entire research career from 1967 to 2009 as a Research Geneticist with the USDA-ARS, first in Ithaca, NY, and from 1969 on in Beltsville, MD. His research focused on breeding and genetics of soybean and legume forages and cover crops.

Dr. Devine bred and released 'Arc' alfalfa, the first alfalfa variety with high resistance to anthracnose disease. He bred the first three soybean varieties for use as forage for livestock and other specialty soybean varieties for biomass and edamame. He also bred and released the hairy vetch cultivars Purple Bounty and Purple Prosperity for winter cover crops to provide organic nitrogen fertilizer and winter cover to reduce erosion. He published numerous scientific research papers on alfalfa, soybeans, and the genetic control of symbiotic nitrogen fixation with rhizobial bacteria. Following retirement from the USDA, he continued breeding improved vegetable and forage soybeans as a private citizen.

Devine was a member of St. Mary of the Mills Catholic Church in Laurel, MD for more than 45 years and a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. He served on the National Council of the American Genetic Association and as chairman of both the

Soybean Genetics Committee and the Soybean Crop Advisory Committee. He helped develop the first Cooperative Regional Project of the 1890 historically Black colleges and universities in the area of Agronomy.

Devine served as mentor to numerous high school students conducting science fair projects. He will be remembered for his mentorship of many young students and scientists and for his love and enthusiasm for the people and history of Ireland.

Clarence J. Peterson



Clarence J. Peterson

Dr. Clarence James (Pete) Peterson, Jr., a CSSA and ASA member for 36 years, passed away on 18 July 2022 at the age of 93. He was born 23 Aug. 1928, in Park City, UT, to Clarence and Jane Peterson. He grew up on the family farm in Nampa, ID where he was active in 4H and FFA and graduated from Nampa High School in 1947. After a year of college at the University of Idaho, he joined the U.S. Army in 1950 and was stationed in Germany. Upon return in 1952, he enrolled back at the university and worked with Idaho Crop Improvement Association. He received his B.S. in Crop Science and an M.S. in Plant Pathology in 1956.

Peterson began his career with the USDA-ARS in Pullman, WA, in 1959 as a technician for renown wheat breeder Dr. Orville Vogel. He was with Vogel during the development and release of the first semidwarf wheat varieties, Gaines and Nugaines, which

transformed wheat production in the Pacific Northwest. Peterson took a leave of absence from the USDA to complete his Ph.D. in 1970 at Oregon State University under the direction of Dr. Warren Kronstad. He returned to Pullman and assumed Dr. Vogel's breeding program upon his retirement, working in close collaboration with geneticist Dr. Bob Allan. His breeding position and program transitioned to Washington State University in 1988. Peterson retired in 1994.

Peterson had a major impact on the Pacific Northwest wheat industry through release and wide-scale adoption of his winter wheat varieties, including Daws, Dusty, Hiller, Kmor, Lewjain, Luke, and Rod. His variety Eltan was the top variety in Washington State from 2001 to 2010 and has been grown on more than 8.5 million acres. It was in commercial production for 28 years, from 1993 through 2020. From 1997 to 2006, approximately one out of three winter wheat acres in the state were in his varieties—mostly Eltan, Rod, or Lewjain.

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