

From the Oat Newsletter, volume 50, 2006:

Dr. Ronald (Ron) D. Barnett  
Award for Distinguished Service to Oat Improvement



Dr. Ron Barnett was born and raised in Bradley, Arkansas. He received a B.S. degree from the University of Arkansas in Agronomy in 1965. After completing his undergraduate degree Ron worked as a graduate assistant at the University of Arkansas and completed a M.S. in Plant Breeding in 1968. Ron then accepted an appointment as a graduate research instructor at Purdue University where he worked under Dr. Fred Patterson. Following the completion of his Ph.D. in 1970, Ron joined the University of Florida as an Assistant Professor and Small Grains Breeder at the North Florida Research Station in Quincy. He was promoted to Associate professor in 1975 and to Professor in 1983.

During his 36 years at Quincy Ron has conducted a diverse and productive small grain breeding program. He has been very successful in developing improved varieties and germplasm of oats, wheat, rye, and triticale. He has released five oat varieties: Florida 502, Chapman, Horizon 314, Horizon 474, and Horizon 321, and co-released two additional oats: Terral Trophy & Vigro Caballo. Ron also released five rye varieties and five triticale varieties. He has released or co-released 20 wheat varieties, including Florida 302, which was the dominant wheat variety across the southern US in the late 1980's.

Ron is creative and opportunistic in his approach to plant breeding. He has always looked for unique niches and needs that he can address, including areas such as hull-less oats, bread quality triticale, and dual purpose or forage oats.

In recognition of his many contributions Ron was named a Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy and the Crop Science Society of America. He was also named by Progressive Farmer Magazine as “Man of the Year in Service to Southeastern Agriculture” in 1990. Ron was also honored by the Southern Small Grain Workers at their meeting in 2005. He has served in leadership positions in many state, regional, national, and international organizations.

Dr. Barnett has provided effective leadership to the Quaker International Oat Improvement Program for many years and currently coordinates the Quaker International Oat Nursery. This assignment entails worldwide collecting of unique oat germplasm, making crosses and beginning early generation development of their progeny and distribution of all of these materials to oat breeders around the world. Ron travels each year to South America as part of the Quaker International Oat Improvement Program and visits with oat scientists to foster exchange of germplasm and relevant scientific knowledge.

Ron has been active in transferring his plant breeding knowledge and acquired skills to others as well. Ron has served as advisor for several graduate students and was supervisor and mentor for Ann Blount, who currently serves as associate professor and forage breeder at the University of Florida in Quincy. Ron has always generously shared his germplasm with other breeding programs and contributed to formation of the SUNGRAINS breeding cooperative among southeastern universities.

Dr. Barnett is married to Pam and they have 3 children and 5 grandchildren. Barnett lives on Millstone Farms near Quincy and stays busy on weekends and evenings breeding beef cattle and helping Pam run a Bed & Breakfast operation on their farm.