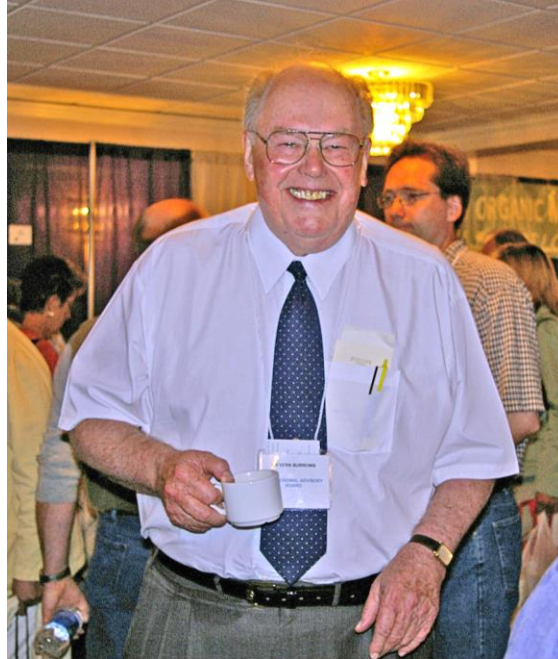




## In Memoriam: Vernon Douglas Burrows, PhD, OC



*Vern enjoying himself at the 2005 annual general meeting of the Canadian Celiac Association.*

*(Photo by Quintin Wight)*

The text in quotes below is taken from the obituary published in the Ottawa Citizen, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020:

“Vernon Douglas Burrows died peacefully in hospital on November 8, 2020. He was born in 1930 in St. Boniface, Manitoba to Ernest George Victor Burrows and Edith Lillian Cartwright. He married Elizabeth Ann (Betty) Machacek (deceased 2012) in 1954. He leaves behind two daughters: Diane (Gregory) and Janet. Vern dearly cared for and loved each and every member of his family through deeds and words. (They) in turn were very proud of (their) creative and inspiring "Dr. Oat".

Vern graduated from the University of Manitoba (BSA and MSc) and the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California (PhD, 1958). He and Betty moved to Ottawa Canada to begin his life-long vocation of agricultural research. Vern had a 40-year career as a research scientist at Ottawa's Experimental Farm, breeding 27 oat varieties (notably AC Gehl) and publishing 100 research papers including four book chapters. He was known for running around his oat plots in Ottawa and California's Imperial Valley with his field notes, Tilley hat and sunscreen. He celebrated innovation of any kind, would promote the merits of oats to anyone who would listen, and was a lunchtime mainstay of the old Carling Building's "eclectic table".



After "retirement", Vern became a research scientist emeritus at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. He volunteered his vast expertise for another 19 years to improve oat crop yield and quality in China and Canada. He and Betty travelled to China 12 times to build scientific connections and friendships with its oat research community. They also welcomed oat scientists from China into their home. Vern received scientific honours from China—the most unique is a large bronze statue of him, holding a sheaf of oats, erected at the Baicheng Academy of Agricultural Science in Jilin Province. Vern also helped the Professional Advisory Board of the Canadian Celiac Association to develop a protocol for producing oats that are edible by many persons with celiac disease. He was an inspiration, mentor and friend to many, both locally and internationally, to the end of his life.

In December 2001, Vern was thrilled to become a member (CM) of the Order of Canada, and in February 2019, he was promoted within the order to become an officer (OC). He received many Canadian scientific awards, as well as the Queen's silver and gold jubilee medals.”

In 1994, Vern received the award for “[Distinguished Service to Oat Improvement](#)” from the American Oat Workers’ Conference. In 2014, he was also [inducted into the Canadian Science and Engineering Hall of Fame](#). That same year, Vern received word that he had been chosen to receive the [International Scientific and Technological Cooperation Award of the People's Republic of China](#). Four years later, Vern not only received word of his promotion within the Order of Canada, but received [recognition from the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, as well as the President’s Award from the Canadian Celiac Association \(CCA\)](#). The CCA has put together a nice tribute to Vern titled "[An Ode to Dr. Oats](#)".

As mentioned above, Vern spent many years collaborating with the Chinese oat breeding community. Upon hearing of Vern’s death, Dr. Changzhong Ren, President of the Baicheng Academy of Agricultural Sciences in Jilin Province, China, sent these words:

“We are very saddened to hear that Dr. Vernon Burrows has passed away. I, and all employees of the Jilin Baicheng Academy of Agricultural Sciences (JBAAS), would like to extend sincere condolences to his loved ones.

Dr. Burrows was my beloved advisor when I worked at AAFC as a visiting scientist. Dr. Burrows and JBAAS established a close collaboration on oat research in 1998. Over the past 20 years, Dr. Burrows visited JBAAS 12 times, and his guidance and suggestions made a tremendous contribution to our oat breeding, research, and training of personnel. The collaboration between Dr. Burrows and JBAAS laid the foundation for the broader cooperation between China and Canada in the area of science and technology. The collaboration between Dr. Burrows and JBAAS led to several China-Canada oat science and technology conferences held at JBAAS, which were later extended to broader, international collaborations. China-Canada Oats S&T Cooperation has been regarded as a role model of international S&T cooperation by various individuals, institutions, and government agencies in both China and Canada. The memorandum of oat S&T cooperation co-signed by JBAAS and AAFC has become a model for further cooperation between China



and Canada in the area of agriculture and has had far-reaching influence on the deepened and long-lasting cooperation and friendship between China and Canada.

Dr. Burrows' outstanding contribution to China-Canada Oat S&T Cooperation has also been highly regarded by the Chinese government. Dr. Burrows was awarded the "China National Friendship Award" and the "People's Republic of China International Science and Technology Cooperation Award", the highest level of awards from the Chinese national government given to a foreign expert. To honour Dr. Burrows' contributions, JBAAS established a sculpture for Dr. Burrows at JBAAS, which has become a symbol of the friendship and collaboration between China and Canada and a tourist attraction for agricultural scientists.

Dr. Burrows will live in our hearts forever!"

Colleagues Lui Jinghui, Baoping Zhao, Mi Junzhen, and others at the Inner Mongolia Agricultural University in Hohhot, China, have also expressed their sympathies, saying that, "During the last twenty years, Dr. Vern Burrows has made an outstanding contribution to oat research between AAFC and IMAU and to Chinese PhD student training."

This is the legacy of Dr. Vern Burrows or, as he will be remembered by many, "Dr. Oat". Further details can be found in his many scientific articles, as well as in the more main-stream articles listed [on his page in Wikipedia](#).



*The statue of Vern in Baicheng, with flowers honouring his passing (Photo by Changzhong Ren)*