

**In memoriam: Dr. Jack Schafer, 1921-2007.**

Condensed from an [obituary in the New York Times, 13 May 2007](#):

Dr. Jack Schafer passed away on May 5th, 2007, in Santa Rosa California, at the age of 86. Jack was a plant pathologist with a productive career improving grain crops. He received a doctoral degree at the University of Wisconsin and began his career with a 19-year stint (1949-1968) at Purdue University in Indiana. He was a core member of a well-known Purdue-US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Small Grain Breeding Team, along with [Ralph M. Caldwell](#), Leroy E. Compton, and [Fred L. Patterson](#). A parade of improved wheat, oat, and barley varieties was produced by this team. 'Knox' wheat, released in 1953, became the leading soft wheat in the US. After the release of 'Arthur' and 'Arthur 71', Purdue-USDA soft wheat comprised over 80% of the US soft wheat acreage and greatly increased wheat yield. This Purdue team also issued hundreds of scientific publications conveying significant disease, insect, and genetic discoveries. Many graduate students trained by this world famous foursome are now serving in important industry and academic positions in the US and abroad.

Jack left Purdue to head the Plant Pathology Department at Kansas State University (1968-1972), followed by eight years as head of the Plant Pathology Department at Washington State University. He followed in the footsteps of his dad, Edwin Schafer, making them the first father-son pair to be department heads at the University. In 1974, while at WSU, Jack was a consultant on wheat disease on a trade mission to China, shortly after President Nixon opened trade relations with that country. Following a short-term assignment to the USDA Integrated Pest Management Program in Beltsville, Maryland, Jack moved to the University of Minnesota, where he was the Research Leader at the USDA-Agricultural Research Service Cereal Rust Laboratory from 1982-1987, when he retired.

In recognition of his research and service to plant pathology, Jack was made a fellow of the American Phytopathological Society (APS) and also served as APS president. More information on his work can be found in his [retirement notice](#).

(Another version of this obituary can be found in the [August, 2007, edition of Phytopathology News](#).)