



Dr. George Fedak retires from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

After more than 50 years of service to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Government of Canada, Dr. George Fedak retired on April 16th 2021. With a career that spanned decades, many thought that that would never happen!

While George spent most of his career working on the breeding and cytogenetics of wheat and barley, he has also contributed significantly to oat research. For example, in 1980, John Martens and George (with the support of Tibor Rajhathy) set off on a botanical expedition to Spain, Portugal, Morocco, and the Canary Islands to collect *Avena* germplasm to try and find that elusive D genome donor.

About 1000 samples were collected on that trip. A student (Nora McGregor) spent the next two summers counting chromosomes. With the help of Bernard Baum, *A. agadiriana* was discovered and *A. atlantica* was rediscovered. Soon after, Qianfa Chen and Ken Armstrong, using *in situ* hybridization, showed that the D genome was actually a modified A genome. In addition, James Chong and Don Harder screened the collection for disease resistance and found resistance at all three ploidy levels.

In the 1990s, George was a part of what was known as the Quaker Oats Consortium, which led the way in developing molecular marker tools for oat. The first oat map constructed using these tools was of the diploid cross *A. atlantica* x *A. hirtula*.

George has always been generous with his time, and an example of that would be his work with scientists in Ukraine. He received a gold medal from the Ukrainian National Academy of Science in 2017. More about George's life and work can be found in the article describing the award.

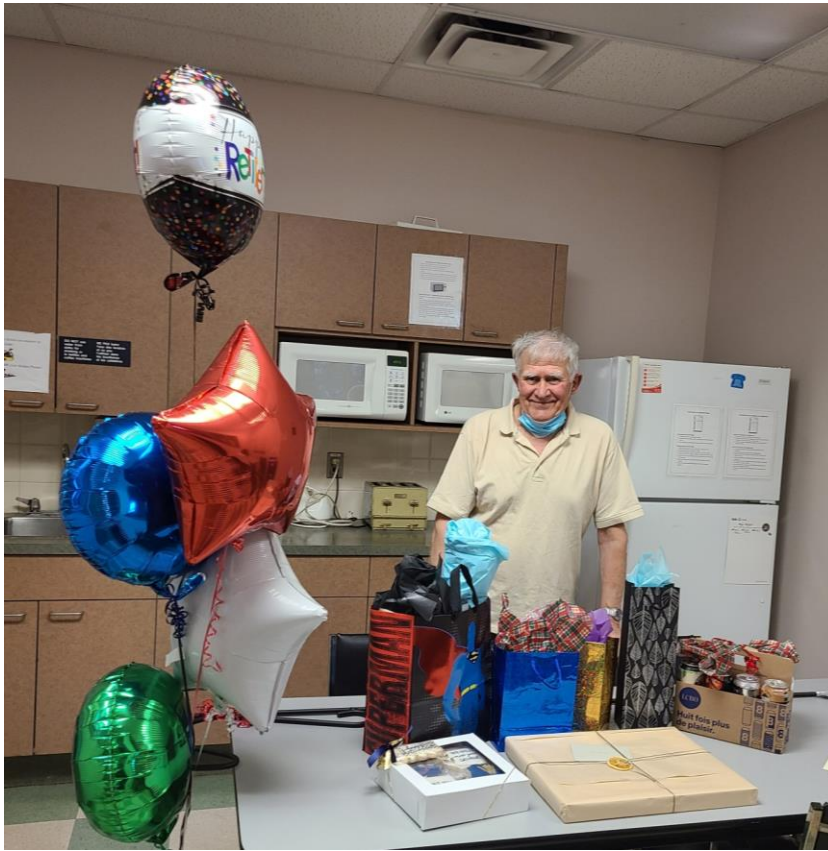
As for George's future, he will continue to work at the Ottawa Research and Development Centre as an Honorary Research Associate. He sends this note regarding the well-wishes he received upon the occasion of his retirement:

"Friends and Colleagues,

I wanted to sincerely thank all those from near and far that sent greetings on my retirement. I was simply overwhelmed by the number of replies and sincere messages of goodwill. Most bring back fond memories of conferences, collaborations, visits and social events. The research has always been fun and elapsed rapidly. The papers, abstracts, book chapters, theses, etc. will find their place in history. However, one of the fringe benefits of our work is meeting the vast number of the finest people on the planet. The memories will last a lifetime.

Thanks to all,

George"



Retiring during the COVID-19 pandemic meant that there was no large gathering for George, but his e-card contained more than 80 pages of signatures, stories, and photographs!

