



Peter C. Whiteman, F.A.I.A.S.
(1938-86)

DR. PETER C. WHITEMAN**IN MEMORIAM**

Dr. Peter Whiteman, who was one of Australia's foremost agricultural scientists, died in Brisbane on 6 April, 1986, aged 48. He was President of the Tropical Grassland Society of Australia in 1977-78. Dr. Whiteman was a University Medallist, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science, and President of the Queensland Branch of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science in 1981. He combined a high intellectual commitment with a practical appreciation of the farm situation. He and his research students attacked with zest a range of Australian agricultural problems.

Peter Whiteman studied at the Queensland Agricultural College and at the University of Queensland. He worked with Professor Graeme Wilson on the drought responses of sorghum and continued his interest in plant physiology as a Research Officer at the C.S.R. David North Plant Research Centre. He studied for his Ph.D. with Professor Dov Koller at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, working on the photosynthesis and transpiration of desert plants.

He was a research scientist in the C.S.I.R.O. Division of Tropical Crops and Pastures from 1965-69 and commenced what was to become a persistent interest in the adaptation and nodulation of tropical pasture legumes. He taught at the University of Queensland from 1969, becoming a reader in 1978.

He was remarkably versatile in his research interests and brought great energy and organisation to the research problems he tackled. Much of his interest centred on tropical pasture science and his studies ranged from the physiological adaptation of grasses to cold temperatures, the tolerance of legumes to flooding and to shade, to the more agronomic aspects of legume establishment and the grazing management of tropical pastures.

One of his notable successes was his work with pigeonpea, *Cajanus cajan*. Initially his interest was in pigeonpea as an animal feed, but he became aware of the immense grain yield potential of this crop when grown at high densities, and its potential for mechanization if plants of suitable stature and photoperiod insensitivity were employed. This work was subsequently taken up and developed by colleagues. Peter Whiteman had real concern for the preservation of the environment and pioneered work on the revegetation of mine waste areas, especially at Mt. Isa.

At the peak of his research activity he attracted research funds which paid the salaries of some 20 staff members. At the age of 48 he had some 85 research publications to his credit.

At the University of Queensland he initiated new postgraduate course work programs in tropical agronomy and re-organized many of the undergraduate courses. He taught with zest and humour, was always available to students, and maintained good academic standards. He endeavoured to transfer technology developed in Northern Australia for pasture improvement to Third World countries. He organized regional training courses in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and the West Indies. His text book on "Tropical Pasture Science" is used throughout the world. He directed a pasture improvement project in the Solomon Islands for the Australian Development Assistance Bureau from 1973-85 and was a Consultant for the International Development Program in Indonesia.

He leaves a wife, Neroli, a son, David, and a daughter, Petra.

L. R. HUMPHREYS