

to develop commercial hazelnut cultivars with extensive disease resistance and broad climatic adaptability. His contributions have been critically important for and instrumental in the rapid advancement of this effort.

Dr. Mehlenbacher exemplifies the ideals laid out by the American Pomological Society for the Marshall P. Wilder Award. He has “rendered outstanding service to horticulture in the area of pomology” for several reasons but particularly for his development of the most important hazelnut cultivars in North

America and increasingly around the world. North America’s hazelnut production is becoming overwhelmingly reliant on the cultivars developed in his program. His ability to utilize the field of genomics/marker assisted breeding within a traditional breeding program to more rapidly develop the critical cultivars the industry has clamored for serves as an example for all breeders. The fantastic progress they have made has the world beating a path to Dr. Mehlenbacher’s door!

– Prepared by Chad Finn



Obituary

Kessler, George M. (1917-2012)

George Morton Kessler, Professor of Horticulture Emeritus at Michigan State University, died at his home in East Lansing, Michigan on June 21, 2012 at 94 years of age. George was a native of Philadelphia, and attended Temple University and Delaware Valley College of Agriculture and Science before enrolling in the horticulture program at Pennsylvania State University. On completion of his junior year in 1941, he served as a 2nd lieutenant in the Army Signal Corps in India, China, and Burma. Following the war he returned to Pennsylvania State University, where he was awarded a B.S. in 1946 and an M.S. the following year. He moved to Michigan State College in September of 1947, where he held a position as instructor in horticulture while working on a Ph.D. with Prof. Alvin Kenworthy. He was appointed Assistant Professor on completion of the degree in 1953, and Associate Professor in 1971. He advised students and taught courses in both the 2-year and 4-year programs for 29 years, retiring in 1982.

George edited the American Pomological Society’s (APS) Fruit Variety and Horticultural Digest (the name was later changed to the Fruit Variety Journal) from 1956 to 1974. He served as Secretary-treasurer (1957-63) and President (1967-68) of APS, as well as a member of the Wilder Medal Committee, which is responsible for selecting recipients of this award for distinction in fruit breeding.



George married Esther Glass during a 10-day leave from army duties in 1943, and the couple were reunited following George’s discharge in 1945. During 68 years of marriage, they reared two children – Marsha (Pattinson) and Frank– and enjoyed the company of five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Esther, who died in 2011, and George were active members of Congregation Kehillat Israel of East Lansing, and traveled widely, making several trips to Israel. George was a committed Labor-Zionist and Yiddish scholar, and a volunteer for Talking Books on the local radio station.

– Prepared by Frank Dennis, Jr.