

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS PAUL N. DROLSOM

Paul Newell Drolsom, professor emeritus, University of Wisconsin-Madison, died July 14, 2007 in Madison, WI at the age of 81. He was survived by his wife, Marian, and two daughters, Amy (Russell) McCoy and Ann (Roger) Worthington.

Dr. Drolsom was born on July 15, 1925 at Martell, WI to Peter and Inga (Qualle) Drolsom and was raised on a dairy farm near Beldenville, WI. In 1943, after graduating from Ellsworth High School, he entered the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Second World War interrupted his undergraduate studies, and in June 1946, he began his service with the 86th Infantry Division in both Europe and the Philippines. He returned to the University of Wisconsin in 1949 and received his B.S. degree the same year. He then began graduate school under the guidance of D. C. Smith (Department of Agronomy) and J. G. Dickson (Department of Plant Pathology). He married Marian Zwerg in 1950. He received his Ph.D. in January 1953 and spent the next five years with U.S. Department of Agriculture and North Carolina State University at Oxford. His research involved tobacco breeding and plant pathology. He then joined the UW Department of Agronomy as assistant professor in April 1958, became an associate professor in 1961, then professor in 1966.

Dr. Drolsom conducted breeding and genetics research with a large number of annual and perennial grass species including sorghum, sudangrass, smooth brome grass, reed canarygrass, orchardgrass, timothy, and maize. His research served many and diverse needs. For example, beginning in the 1940s, the Wisconsin State Highway Department began testing of grasses throughout Wisconsin for purposes of erosion control. After Dr. Drolsom joined the UW Department of Agronomy, he joined the effort and began research on salt-tolerance of grasses especially suited for use on roadsides and streets. He developed strategies to increase slope cover and stabilization, and he was recognized for his work along Highway 151 east of Sun Prairie and elsewhere in the state.

Dr. Drolsom was one of the first plant breeders in the U.S. to systematically evaluate and improve the nutritional quality of forage grasses. His research with smooth brome grass was particularly notable in this regard. His studies of anatomical, morphological and chemical characteristics related to digestibility led eventually to the release of several high-yielding, persistent and nutritious cultivars. Badger and Alpha, released by M. D. Casler in the 1990s, are, perhaps, the best known examples of forage cultivars tracing directly back to Drolsom's pioneering efforts.

Prussic acid or hydrogen cyanide (HCN) poisoning has long been a problem for forage sorghums, and Dr. Drolsom used a related species, sudangrass, to help develop low-HCN cultivars. Together with Frank Cherns of the UW Department of Poultry Science, he evaluated different forage sorghum types in turkey pastures for several years. Drolsom then conducted inheritance studies in forage sorghums and sorghum x sudangrass hybrids.

Dr. Drolsom also worked with D. A. Rohweder, a forage agronomist with UW-Extension, to determine appropriate application rates for fertilizers in order to not only maximize yields, but also increase stand persistence over time. They also determined that, among major perennial grass species, reed canarygrass was a particularly efficient forage.

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In 1964, UWCALS joined a USAID project initiated at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre, Brazil to establish a graduate studies and research program in agronomy and related disciplines. The objective was to develop a year-around forage program to shorten the beef-raising period from five to three or fewer years. Dr. Drolsom was the resident agronomist on the first team in 1964-1966. His responsibilities included graduate student development and initiating demonstration programs for winter pastures. He rejoined the effort with the third team in 1970-1972 headed up by J. M. Scholl, focusing on pasture production and management. From 1967 to 1970, Dr. Drolsom served as chair of the Faculty Student Teams project where students and faculty formed research teams to address problems in corn and soybean production in southern Brazil.

In the late 1970s, Dr. Drolsom shifted his research direction from forage grasses to inbred line development for the corn breeding program. He focused on cold-tolerant germplasm adapted to the northern central region of the U.S. in order to complement the germplasm development efforts of J. H. Lonquist in the Department of Agronomy. Dr. Drolsom was a humble, collaborative departmental colleague always willing to shoulder extra departmental responsibilities. He was active in many professional societies including the American Society of Agronomy, the Crop Science Society of America, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the American Genetics Association and the American Forage and Grassland Council. He was awarded the AFGC Merit Certificate in 1980. He was a member in several honorary academic societies including Gamma Sigma Delta, Sigma Xi, Alpha Zeta, and Phi Eta Sigma.

Over his 30 years with the UW Department of Agronomy, Dr. Drolsom supervised the research of 41 graduate students, including 20 M.S. and 21 Ph.D. candidates from many regions of the world. Dr. Drolsom was a founding member and chair of the UW Plant Breeding and Plant Genetics program. He was also associate chair of agronomy, a member of the Faculty Senate, and served on the CALS Academic Planning Council. He taught Agronomy 100 (Principles and Practices of Crop Production), Agronomy 330 (The Breeding of Field Crops) and Agronomy 850 (Advanced Plant Breeding). He retired from the Department of Agronomy as professor emeritus in 1988.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

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