



For Immediate Release

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Former WSSA President Leaves an Important Legacy in Weed Science

- *Known as a strong supporter of weed science research and as an early pioneer in herbicide resistance education*

LAWRENCE, Kansas – August 24, 2012 – When Dr. Homer LeBaron passed away this summer, the former president and Fellow of the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) left behind an important legacy – from basic research in the field of weed management to his work promoting the weed science profession. LeBaron advanced our understanding of herbicide modes of action and resistance management, and he was instrumental in launching new science-based practices for integrated weed management. He is also remembered for his valuable role in promoting strong research collaborations involving government, universities and extension.

LeBaron was born in Alberta, Canada. He earned B.S and M.S. degrees at Utah State University, and a Ph.D. at Cornell University.

He began his industry career with Geigy Chemical Corporation (now Syngenta), where he rose through the ranks to become a senior research fellow in biochemistry, new technology and basic research. He was one of the world's leading authorities on the triazine herbicides and their role in revolutionizing weed control to benefit food production.

An active proponent of the weed science profession, LeBaron became the first individual to lead three separate weed science societies. He served as president of WSSA, the Northeastern Weed Science Society and the Southern Weed Science Society.

He was also one of the first weed scientists to understand the global significance of the development of weed resistance to herbicides. "Homer spearheaded symposia and wrote and delivered many papers on the topic," says John Ahrens, emeritus plant scientist at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. "There are few people who worked as hard for

weed science as he did. He was a true leader and a respected spokesperson on many of the most important issues in agriculture and the sciences.”

Arnold Appleby, professor emeritus in crop science at Oregon State University, concurs. “His work on the threat posed by herbicide resistance helped to launch a new generation of weed control best practices,” Appleby said. “Growers came to understand the impact of resistance on crop yields and how important it is to avoid repeated, uninterrupted use of herbicides with the same mechanism of action.” Appleby characterized LeBaron as “a fine scientist, and a kind and gentle man who was held in high esteem.”

The USDA awarded LeBaron a Certificate of Appreciation for outstanding leadership in groundwater research programs. And he became the first scientist from industry to receive the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology’s Charles A. Black Award – a recognition acknowledging his outstanding achievements in promoting sound science and a public understanding of agriculture.

Perhaps one of LeBaron’s most lasting legacies, though, is his impact as a mentor and educator.

“He was a ‘one of a kind’ guy who had a depth of knowledge that you don’t see in many people,” says Harold Coble, agronomist with the USDA’s Agricultural Research Service and professor emeritus at North Carolina State University. “He was always willing to share what he knew freely. He really took me under his arm when I first came to the University and helped me gain the knowledge I needed. And he did the same thing when I was asked to lead WSSA as its president in 1993. He said being president could be a lonely role, but he encouraged me to talk to everyone I could, gather information, try to gain consensus and then move forward. It meant a lot to me then and now.”

LeBaron was a member of the International Weed Science Society, American Society of Agronomy, American Chemical Society, Entomological Society of America, American Phytopathological Society, Council for Agricultural Science and Technology, Sigma Xi Scientific Research Society, Aquatic Plant Management Society and European Weed Research Society. He was the author or coauthor of 90 publications, including six books and multiple special reports.

About the Weed Science Society of America

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit scientific society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides science-based information to the public and policy makers, fosters awareness of weeds and their impact on managed and natural ecosystems, and promotes cooperation among weed science organizations across the nation and around the world. For more information, visit www.wssa.net.