

## *Georges Piquemal*

*Georges Piquemal* retired recently after forty years of work largely devoted to the breeding of oil-seed crops, and in particular, sunflower.

The early part of his life was quite adventurous. He was born in Indo-China, where he spent his childhood and studied to become "Ingénieur d'agronomie tropicale". He was sent to the Congo to work on groundnuts mainly, but also, already in 1948, on sunflower. Then he went to Algeria to work on industrial crops. He joined the Inra Station at Montpellier in 1961, with responsibilities at first not only for sunflower, but also rapeseed and olive trials. However, sunflower soon became preponderant.

Georges Piquemal has contributed significantly to many aspects of genetic and breeding research on sunflower, in particular methods of improving germination and of emasculation using gibberellin treatments, self fertility and seed set, *Macrophomina* resistance and dwarfs. He initiated and then supported the work both on genetic resources and *in vitro* techniques for which the Montpellier team is now well known. He is the author of many scientific papers and many graduate and postgraduate students have been grateful for his instruction and his understanding of the crop species he knows so well. He also collaborated in many Fao programmes.

His knowledge of the sunflower is probably the most striking characteristic of Georges Piquemal. His memory of all the diverse genotypes in his breeding nursery made him a walking data bank of genetic resources, before there were computers to memorize all the details. His knowledge permitted him to breed many different materials that have been, are, and will be, of great use to the sunflower community - be it farmers or commercial breeders.

One of his first successes was Issanka, an or rather the early population which was widely grown in the sixties and seventies in areas where Peredovik was too late. In the early eighties, he developed the successful hybrids, Rodeo, Elia, and Bolero. More recently, last year, the inbred lines he bred were parents of hybrids representing almost one third of the French sunflower area. This will continue, as Georges Piquemal's lines have not yet been fully exploited. Companies are still making and presenting for registration new hybrids based on them. On his retirement from Inra, his interest in breeding led him to spend some years in the private sector, where, as at Inra, he was a teacher and counselor for a new generation of sunflower breeders.

In the last two years, he has almost retired from the sunflower circuit, but we know he is still extremely active, in particular, with the charity organisation "les restaurants du coeur". We would like to thank him for his considerable contribution to sunflower research, and to wish him a long, active and enjoyable retirement.