



R. Ralph Baker Graduate Student Award for Research Excellence

Ralph "Tex" Baker, a professor of Plant Pathology at Colorado State University whose research helped rescue Colorado's floriculture industry, died April 11, 1994. He moved to Fort Collins, where he earned his undergraduate and masters degrees at Colorado State University. His doctorate was obtained from the University of California at Berkeley.

When Tex joined the CSU faculty in 1954, several floriculture diseases were pushing the state's flowering-plant industry close to collapse. His research on Fusarium wilt and stem rot of carnations led to the development of a disease-free planting stock program utilizing plant cuttings, a technique that nearly eliminated all major floriculture diseases. Tex's work also led to many of today's standard sanitary greenhouse procedures, including foot baths, keeping hoses off the ground, and disinfecting irrigation systems and cutting tools. During the 1970s, Tex collaborated on several space-related projects in which he studied the effect of weightlessness on plant cells, analyzed moon dust samples for the presence of living organisms, and evaluated the influence of moon dust on plant growth. He received two NASA group-achievement awards for this research.

Tex also was a pioneer in the epidemiology of soil borne plant pathogens. His work, and that of his many students and visiting scientists, on fungistasis and biological control furnished many new insights into interactions in soil ecosystems.

Because of his work, Tex once appeared on the *What's My Line* television show. He authored or coauthored more than 100 research articles, 40 reviews, book chapters and sections in symposia proceedings, published numerous technical bulletins, and edited three books. He also served as advisor and friend to many graduate students and colleagues.

The Colorado Greenhouse Growers Association inducted Tex Baker into the Colorado Floriculture Hall of Fame. He also received a Friend of the Industry Awards from the association. He was an American Phytopathological Society (APS) fellow and was honored with a lifetime achievement award by the Pacific Division of the APS.

Tex was known as a down-to-earth family man whose passions included baseball and church. He was a Little League coach and Sunday-school teacher for many years. He is survived by three sons, Sean, John, Kit and three daughters, Dawn, Nicole and Jennifer.