

**Ann Oaks
1929-2006**



Dr. Ann Oaks died Jan. 13, 2006, at age 76. She served as an adjunct faculty member in the former department of botany at the University of Guelph from 1989 to 1999, after having spent most of her research career as a faculty member in McMaster University's biology department (1965 to 1989, emeritus).

She studied plant nitrogen metabolism, primarily in maize seedlings, and the quality of her research gained her international respect. She developed and cherished working relationships and friendships with scientists from India, Japan, Europe and across North America. Her work not only advanced the understanding of the physiology of plant growth but also helped open doors for women in the field.

Dr. Oaks became a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1986 and received the Gold Medal from the Canadian Society of Plant Physiologists/La Société Canadienne de Physiologie Végétale (CSPP/SCPV) in 1988. Her prominence and leadership in plant physiology were recognized through an invitation to describe her career in a prefatory chapter for the *Annual Reviews of Plant Physiology and Plant Molecular Biology* (Oaks, A. 2000. Fifty years of plant science: Was there really no place for a woman?, 51:1-16).

Dr. Oaks passed on her passion for plant physiology and biochemistry to both undergraduate and graduate students, encouraging them to question and challenge ideas. She fought against the untested introduction of genetically modified crops. She received a DSc from McMaster in 2004 and was recognized as a Woman of Distinction for lifetime achievement by the Guelph YWCA. She supported many charities, and her generous contributions to the CSPP/SCPV led to the establishment of the Ann Oaks Scholarship Fund.

Raised in Port Arthur, Dr. Oaks was an excellent swimmer and good skier active in many other sports. Her lifelong fascination with nature led her to become one of the first female firewatchers, a job that gave her ample opportunity to gather and identify local plants and animals. Her interest in biology led to a BA (Honours Biology) from the University of Toronto in 1951 and to MA and PhD degrees from the University of Saskatchewan in 1954 and 1959, respectively.

Credits to the University of Guelph