APPS Honorary Member

Dr Ric Cother

Ric Cother completed a Bachelor of Science Agriculture (Honours) in 1969 at Sydney University under a New South Wales Department of Agriculture traineeship paying just $4 per week. After this he accepted a Commonwealth scholarship and commenced a PhD in 1970. He moved with his supervisor (David Griffin) to ANU in 1971, where he worked on survival of *Phytophthora drechsleri*.

Following his PhD he was appointed as a Plant Pathologist at Yanco in 1973, working on potatoes, rice, bladder saltbush decline, onions and other vegetables. He believed the best disease diagnoses were carried out in the field where a better appreciation of the problem could be formed and still argues for a distinction between diagnosis and identification.

In1979 he worked at IPO in Wageningen, Netherlands with the then guru of plant bacteriology, Henk Mass Gesteranus. This is where his love of all things bacteriological began. He became interested in the aetiology of disease, especially soft rot *Erwinia* spp., and in endophytic bacteria that became pathogenic when the host physiology was disrupted. In the next 15 years at Yanco he was promoted to Research Scientist and Senior Research Scientist before being transferred to the Agricultural Institute Orange to work on biological control of weeds using fungal pathogens - primarily Alismataceae weeds in rice but also on the coastal weed, bitou bush. In 1989, he returned to his beloved bacteriology and took over the role of plant bacteriologist after the untimely death of Peter Fahy.

In 1995 he was appointed as a Principal Research Scientist, a position he held until his retirement in 2008. During this period he was also the Senior Editor for Disease Notes for APP and became Editor-in-Chief of the journal, a position he held for 7 years. Along the way he had 14 productive years collaborating with Charles Sturt University and supervised three PhD students there and one at the University of Western Sydney. In the period 2005-08 he became the research leader of an ACIAR-funded project in capacity building in Cambodia during which the team identified 4 bacterial diseases in rice not previously known to occur there, and a new species of *Pseudomonas* causing serious yield losses in rice.

When asked what his greatest claim to a moment's fame was he replied "Publishing the first paper reporting a plant disease caused by a human pathogen" - (*Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in onions) in *Phytopathology,* **66**: 828-834.) Only a bacteriologist would give such an answer.

His claims to fame reach far beyond this. Ric has been a dedicated plant pathologist and an inspiration to colleagues and students and a stalwart of the Australasian Plant Pathology Society throughout his career.