

IN MEMORIAM OF PROFESSOR STIG BLIXT

Professor Stig Blixt, Lansskrona, passed away on June 20, 2009, 79 years of age. He was born on January 2, 1930, in Lansskrona and is survived by his wife, Birgitta, and their five daughters with families.

Stig Blixt completed a lower grade in school in 1945 and started work as an assistant at the Cytogenetic Laboratory of Weibullsholm Plant Breeding Institute, Lansskrona. There, his extraordinary career in pea genetics started. He worked both with traditional crosses and through induced mutations. In the mutation work he collaborated with Åke Gustafsson, Professor in Genetics, at the University of Lund, and Professor Gustafsson proposed to Stig Blixt that he should summarize his work in a dissertation on mutations in *Pisum*. In 1972, Stig published a solid dissertation on “Mutation Genetics in *Pisum*”. He was awarded the doctorate only after special permission from His Majesty the King, as Stig had not the necessary primary degree.



Stig Blixt was a very productive scientific author. He published more than one hundred scientific papers either alone or with co-authors. Most of them were published in “*Agri Hortique Genetica*”, the scientific journal of Weibullsholm. In a note in the internationally renowned journal “*Nature*”, he commented on Gregor Mendel’s, what some people consider, too fortunate results of pea crosses. Stig Blixt was active in the start of the world wide organization “*Pisum Genetics Association*” (PGA), and during more than 20 years he was secretary of the organization. He built up and maintained a unique pea gene bank at Weibullsholm, and he was one of the first to use the computer for storage and organization of all information on the pea lines and their genes. At his retirement he was elected as the first life member of PGA.

In the end of the 1970’s, Stig Blixt worked in Brazil on a three year project for SIDA, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, with the purpose to establish an Institute for Research on Legumes and Barley. He also assisted in the practical work of chromosome doubling and to check the chromosome number of different species at Weibullsholm. His work was very important for instance in the development of ‘Sara’, a variety of red clover, which during many years, has been a very popular variety among the Swedish farmers. Stig Blixt was interested in many things and very knowledgeable. He engaged himself very early in the computerization at the Weibullsholm Plant Breeding Institute. He always wanted strong challenges, and so he started with a computer program for forage crops which are harvested during several years and several times every year. He meant that when the program for those crops was working then it would be an easy match to transfer it to the annual crops. His computer program was used by the Forage Department at Weibullsholm until 1993.

Stig Blixt moved his base collection of peas to the Nordic Gene Bank and started to work there in 1988. He transferred all information on the material from the old Wang computers to the modern PCs. His competence in computer programming was well taken care of when he modernized the registration and handling of the seed storage. He continued this work until 1990 when he was appointed head and director of the Nordic Gene Bank. He was also involved when a security seed vault was built in an abandoned mine under permafrost on the island of Svalbard close to the North Pole. He stayed in this position until his retirement in 1995.

Stig Blixt was also interested in nature in general and especially in the flora. He was for many years active in the local association “*Landskronatraktens Natur*”. He worked hard with the edition of

Mårten Sjöbeck's last book "Det sydsvenska landskapets historia och vård" (The History and Maintenance of the Landscape in South Sweden) which was published by Landskronatraktens Natur in 1973. He was also the editor of "Floran I Landskrona kommun" (The Flora in the Municipality of Landskrona) by John Kraft (1996). When the Lund Botanical Society during 1990-2003 made an inventory of the flora of Skåne (South Sweden), Stig Blixt was very active. In 1974, he was awarded a golden medal as a mark of honor from the municipality of Landskrona.

Stig Blixt was highly appreciated by everybody and well known for his wide knowledge. He took care of his interest of nature and plants also in the family's garden in Ängahusen just outside Landskrona where he made up a number of natural ecosystems and where he could study the adaption of different plants.

Colleagues at Weibullsholm

Curt Nilsson, Hans-Arne Jönsson, Gunnar Svensson