

OBITUARY

## Professor Antonio Canova (1927-2017)



In July, 2017, Professor Antonio Canova passed away, after a life dedicated to research and education in plant pathology. Antonio Canova was born in Luzzara (Reggio Emilia), Italy on June 25, 1927, and graduated in agriculture at the University of Bologna in 1951. His thesis was on *Fusarium lateritium* as the agent of an apple disease. He was then among the first plant pathologists studying plant viruses in Italy after his training in Braunschweig (Germany). It was also in Germany where he met Angela, who later became his beloved wife. Together, they had two children, Alberto and Cristina.

Prof. Canova got his professorship in plant pathology in 1959, and later began teaching Plant Pathology at the Agricultural Faculty of the Bologna University (Italy). His research concentrated on pathogenesis and epidemiology of viral and fungal diseases with particular focus on cercosporiosis and rizomania of sugarbeet, and on several fruit tree viruses and their relationship with insect vectors and alternative host plants. His pioneering work on the role of *Polymyxa* spp. in virus transmission is of par-

ticular note. His research helped to develop basic understanding and broad applied relevance of pathogen-free plant propagation materials for disease management, and for definition and verification of sanitation schemes for production of fruit trees and grapevine free from viruses. His research on mycorrhization, aimed at improving plant fitness and soil pathogen resistance during establishment of micro-propagated hosts, also had practical disease management applications.

Prof. Canova was author and co-author of numerous scientific papers, and the virology book in the “*Manuale di Patologia Vegetale*” edited by his plant pathology mentor Prof. Gabriele Goidànich. Besides teaching plant pathology and mentoring students and young researchers in several branches of the discipline, Prof. Canova was also Director of the “Scuola di Specializzazione in Fitopatologia” for several years, and Director of the “Istituto di Patologia vegetale” from 1985 until 1997, when the Institute merged in other kind of aggregated structures at the *Alma Mater Studiorum* – University of Bologna. He

was the first President of the Italian Society of Plant Pathology (SIPaV) from 1992-1993.

Prof Canova's collaboration and service to the Mediterranean Phytopathological Union (MPU) continued for many years. This was first as Assistant Editor of *Phytopathologia Mediterranea*, together with Prof Antonio Graniti, when the Editors-in-Chief were Prof. A. Ciccarone and Prof G. Goidànich. Later, the seat of the journal moved from the Bologna University to the University of Bari but the Editorial office remained in Bologna, and Prof. Canova continued to work with great dedication to *Phytopathologia Medi-*

*terranea* as Editor-in-Chief, together with Prof. A. Graniti. He retired on 1997 but continued to direct the journal with great care until 1999, when the seat of the journal moved to Florence.

The MPU owes sincere gratitude for the dedicated, insightful and extensive contributions that Prof. Canova made. He helped to lay foundations for the development and growth of *Phytopathologia Mediterranea*, as a key component of the MPU activities and plant pathology knowledge transfer and international communication.