

Scientist never lost his passion

BRYAN Simon was an affable person, committed to serving others, and well known for his dry sense of humour. He also was a family man, half-marathon runner, Queensland Reds supporter, violinist, agrostologist and grass taxonomist.

He was deeply passionate about grasses irrespective of where they came from in the world.

Bryan exhibited great courage and a positive attitude in the eight months following his diagnosis with cancer. He was busy finishing his autobiography, updating manuscripts and grass descriptions until his last day. He never lost his sense of humour, his love of family, music and cricket.

Born in South Africa, at the age of seven he moved with his family to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) where he attended Milton High School in Harare (Bulawayo) and then University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, where he was awarded his BSc in 1964.

He was employed as a botanist at the National Herbarium of Rhodesia in 1965 and later travelled to the United Kingdom, where he completed his MSc in grass taxonomy at the University of Reading in 1971.

In 1970, Bryan married his devoted life partner, Pam Nicole. They realised Rhodesia's instability was not the place to begin their family and consequently immigrated to Australia in 1974, where they raised five children: Douglas, Patrick, David, Mary-Anne and Caroline.

Bryan's career as a grass taxonomist continued in Brisbane at the Queensland Herbarium, where he researched, discovered and described grasses until he was made redundant in December 2012.

He was internationally recognised for his scientific contributions to taxonomy and systematics of grasses and information systems for the world's fourth largest family of flowering plants with 11,300 species.

Bryan collaborated extensively with other researchers in Queensland, Australia and internationally.



BRYAN KENNETH SIMON

Agrostologist, grass taxonomist

Born: April 14, 1943, Witbank, South Africa

Died: January 3, 2015, Brisbane

He was happy to share his vast knowledge and provided support as a mentor and supervisor.

Bryan contributed more than 5000 herbarium plant specimens (mostly grasses) from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, US and Australia; 2220 of these are incorporated in the collections of the Queensland Herbarium, with duplicates in other herbaria around the world.

Bryan's passion for grasses took him to all parts of the world and he worked with leading grass specialists in the UK, US, Europe and South America.

However, he was a quiet achiever who had a penchant for detail and accuracy and he accumulated a prolific output of more than 150 scientific papers from his work.

Bryan's other quest was to simplify identification and disseminate knowledge of the complex field of grass botany via online keys and information systems.

He compiled and published with Donovan Sharp, *AusGrass: Grasses of Australia*, the first interactive identification key and information system for the 1323 grass species native or naturalised in Australia.

Bryan also developed GrassWorld, an identification tool and information system for the grasses of the world, and was instrumental in developing German and Spanish versions.

He described three genera and 78 species new to science. A species of native canegrass from Queensland (*Dinebra simoniana*) was named in his honour.

In his retirement, Bryan continued his research at the herbarium as an honorary research associate.

At the time of his death he was finishing his contributions to the *Flora of Australia*, updating his online *Augrass 2* accounts of Australian grasses and his scratchpad descriptions for *GrassWorld*, his online information system of the world's grasses.

Bryan was generously and faithfully supportive of family members who had fallen on hard times, and he regularly donated to many charitable organisations.

He was enthusiastically inclusive with all his pursuits. He encouraged people to join him running, his children and later grandchildren to play the violin, and family members at his tennis club.

His interests and hobbies varied greatly from the investment property market, to DIY home renovator, to meticulous home accountant.

He also enjoyed attending concerts and travelling and kept in touch with family and friends far and wide. While on the home front, he loved being part of all the celebrations a big family has such as birthdays, weddings or graduations.

A romantic at heart, he insisted on celebrating his 40th wedding anniversary days before his daughter's wedding so he wouldn't miss it.

Bryan's last few days were spent in palliative care where he was surrounded by his family and a steady stream of visitors.

He is survived by Pam, his wife of 45 years; five children and seven grandchildren.