



Kurt John Leonard

December 6, 1939 - March 30, 2025

Kurt J. Leonard of Shoreview died on March 30, 2025. He was born in 1939 on a farm near Holstein, Iowa. He started his education in a one-room school house and graduated from Holstein High School in 1958. He earned a botany degree at Iowa State University in 1962 and a Ph.D. in plant pathology from Cornell University in 1968.

From 1968 to 1988, Kurt worked as a research plant pathologist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Research Service (ARS) stationed at North Carolina State University, and as adjunct professor of Plant Pathology.

From 1988 to 2001 he was director of the USDA, ARS Cereal Disease Laboratory, and an adjunct professor of Plant Pathology, on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. Kurt retired in 2001 but continued to research and write until 2007.

Kurt published more than 130 research articles on cereal crop diseases and three books on plant pathology. He also described one new genus and several new species of parasitic fungi.

Kurt served on the American Phytopathological Society (APS) Governing Council and was one of the U.S. representatives on the Council of the

International Society for Plant Pathology. He was appointed editor-in-chief of APS Press and the journal Phytopathology. He also served as senior editor for the British journal Plant Pathology and the German journal Plant Breeding. He was named a Fellow of the American Phytopathological Society in 1983.

Kurt's work took him to many destinations on every continent except Antarctica. His research included international collaborations with scientists from Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Israel, India, Egypt, China, Germany, France, Russia, and Kazakhstan.

His family would like you to know that he did not work all the time, loved classical music, participated in his children's interests, and had the best sense of humor.

Kurt is survived by his wife of nearly 64 years Maren Leonard, daughter Maria Tyrrell of Rochester, MN, daughter Mary (Steve) Adah of Boyds, MD, son Ben (Amy) Leonard of Red Wing; as well as 8 grandchildren, Justin, Janie, Alex, Katherine, Nora, Jack, Henry, and Molly; and two great-grandchildren, Evelyn and Atlan. He is also survived by brothers Gary (Mary Ann), formerly of Austin MN, and John (Susan) of Ely, and sisters, Christine Wiese (Dave Weber) of Holstein, IA, and Irene (Phil) Richardson of Kirksville, MO. He was preceded in death by his father, Elvin; his mother, Irene; and his older brother, David, formerly of Mondamin, IA.

A brief gathering for family, friends, and former colleagues is planned for June 29th at 2pm at Washburn-McReavy Shoreview Chapel, 515 Hwy 96 West. In lieu of flowers, please write your legislators and tell them to value government workers.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN **29**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

Shoreview Chapel
515 Highway 96 West
Shoreview, MN 55126

Tribute Wall



“ *Vivid Recollections* was purchased for the family of Kurt John Leonard.



June 17, 2025 at 03:06 PM



“ *Serene Retreat* was purchased for the family of Kurt John Leonard.



June 03, 2025 at 07:09 AM