



# GEORGOFILIA WORLD

Newsletter of the Georgofili Accademy

## MEMORIES ABOUT SILVIERO SANSAVINI

by John Palmer

October 17 2016

\*\*\*

**This is John Palmer's presentation to the ISHS Symposium on Orchard Systems, held in Bologna 28 August-2 September 2016**



For those of you who know very little about Professor Silviero Sansavini, may I recommend the article in *Chronica Horticulturae* (Volume 56 (1), the first one in 2016), it's in an

extended interview form, so it is very much in his own words. I find it interesting that Silviero is a local boy to Bologna. In these days of people moving around to develop their careers, even moving countries, I find it unusual

that Silviero is still in the area he was born in, but perhaps that says something for close knit Italian society.

My first meeting with Silviero was at the first meeting of this group at East Malling in 1976, when Silviero presented a paper on the mechanical pruning of fruit trees, and here we are in 2016 hearing papers on the mechanical pruning of fruit trees - *plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose*.

The second meeting of this group was in the South Tyrol in Lana in 1980. It's appropriate to show this picture, as at the front of this group are some of the giants on whose shoulders you in these Working Groups stand - people such as Silviero, John Jackson, Bob .

Wertheim and Herman Oberhofer, who arranged the Lana meeting, and did so much for the fruit industry in the South Tyrol.

The meeting at Lana was also interesting as it introduced me to the rivalry between the different departments of horticultural science in Italy. We, in England, had a rivalry between horticultural departments that extended to sports events, but in Italy there seemed to be a whole different league of rivalry - it was an interesting introduction to Italian educational politics.

But getting back to Silviero's career, it is interesting that following his first degree he was a kind of extension agent, so the application of science to real field issues has remained a passion for him throughout his career. Young postgraduates might find this comment useful from Silviero "it's important for young scholars to learn to follow their scientific inclinations, even if it means going somewhat against the

grain laid down by their supervisors."

The word that comes over to me when I think of Silviero is passion. We need passion and enthusiasm to encourage young people to enter our field of horticultural science, and Silviero has demonstrated that in abundance.

It is impossible to summarize his career in a few sentences. He became a full professor here at Bologna when he was 38. His scientific interests are enormously wide, from the mechanical pruning of fruit trees to cisgenetics. He was Full Professor of Pomology and Director, from 1977 to 1998 and from 2001 till 2007, of the Department of Fruit and Woody Plant Sciences. He was additionally, Head

of the Research Center for Fruit Breeding and Variety Improvement from 1976 until 2008. In 2009 he was made Professor Emeritus of the University of Bologna.

He has a prodigious publication record, he is author or co-author of more than 600 papers on pomology, physiology and the genetic-biotechnology aspects of pome and stone fruit production and orchard management. He also managed at the same time to be Editor-in-chief of the monthly magazine *Rivista di Frutticoltura* for thirty years.

His leadership of national and international horticultural science societies has been exceptional. He was chair of the Fruit Section of the Italian Horticultural Society for 12 years and then six years as its president. That experience was invaluable when he was chair of the Fruit Section of ISHS for 8 years and 4 years as President of ISHS from 1994 to 1998. Out of the 17 Fellows of the ISHS, Silviero is the

only one from Italy, and he was made a Fellow in 2002. For a member of ISHS to become a Fellow, he has to have made an outstanding contribution to horticultural science worldwide. In the same year he was made an Honorary Member of ISHS for exceptional service to ISHS.

Silviero has excellent editing skills, not only shown in the number of Actas he has been involved with but the number of key Italian books on fruit and woody plant science he has edited. He has been involved in organising several dozen congresses, symposia and workshops for the Italian Horticultural Society and for ISHS. A colleague of mine recalls an ISHS Symposium organised by Silviero

in Rimini in the 1980s, he still remembers the great food! Apparently, this symposium even had impromptu skinny dipping in the sea at night, but you will be pleased to know that Silviero was not involved in this extra-curricular activity. On the field trip at another symposium he organised, they were running behind time so Silviero cancelled the coffee break, after all they had so much yet to see.

I have only scratched the surface of the achievements and national and

international awards that Silviero has received. An exceptional career by any standards, but one marked, in my opinion, with enormous passion for all branches of horticultural science. I conclude with a further quote from Silviero about careers in science:

A career is made up first1y of enthusiasm and dedication. Then comes insight, clearly seeing the issues at stake and how to achieve your goals. Next in line is the perseverance you need to pursue them. The last is luck, by which I mean realising when opportunity knocks and seizing it, since the right time and place might not occur again. And finally a few more pictures I have managed to find of this exceptional man.

