

## Obituary: Dr. Sérgio Batista Alves



Dr. Sérgio Batista Alves died of cancer on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2008 in Piracicaba, São Paulo, Brazil, at the age of 64 years. He was one of the founding fathers of insect pathology in Brazil and dedicated his life to teaching and research on microbial control.

After graduating in agricultural engineering from the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro – UFRRJ in 1969, he worked as a Professor at the Faculdade de Agronomia e Zootecnia Manoel Carlos Gonçalves in Espírito Santo do Pinhal-SP from 1970 until 1977.

Sérgio received a MSc and PhD in Entomology from the University of São Paulo (ESALQ-USP) where he started to work in 1977. His initial studies focused on the use of *Metarhizium anisopliae* against spittlebugs in pasture and sugarcane, and this project turned out to be very successful; in 2008, *M. anisopliae* was applied to about 1 million hectares of sugarcane and pasture land in Brazil. Sérgio founded the first laboratory of Insect Pathology and Microbial Control in Brazil.

From 1987 to 1989 he frequently visited the University of Florida where he had a collaborative project with Dr. Jerry Stimac on biological control of fire ants and other urban pests. Sérgio's many international collaborators included Don Roberts, Richard Humber, Drion Boucias, Roberto Pereira and Clay McCoy.

His research had a major impact on the use of microbial control, especially with fungal pathogens, but also with viruses, bacteria and microsporidia. He developed commercial microbial products such as *Biomax*, *Boveril* WP, *Metarril* WP and *Trichodermil* SC.

Sérgio helped to set up laboratories for the production of fungal pathogens in Brazil (Labormax, Itafoite BioProdutos, ESALQ), Peru (Servicio Nacional de Sanidad Agrária del Ministério de Agricultura) and Florida, USA (University of Florida, Gainesville).

Sérgio's long and distinguished career with the USP included over 180 publications, four books, 40 book chapters, co-authorship of an international patent on control of termites and the discovery of numerous insect pathogens. One of Sérgio's major contributions

was the publication of the book *Microbial Control of Insects* in 1986 as this was the very first textbook about microbial control in Brazil. In 2008 he edited, with Dr. Rogério Biaggioni Lopes, a book entitled *Microbial Control of Pests in Latin America: Advances and Challenges*.

Sérgio supervised 24 MSc and 19 PhD students from various countries including Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Peru, and Colombia. He received 12 awards including the Edilson B. Oliveira Award, the highest honor from the Brazil Entomological Society.

Sérgio was a wonderful person and his enthusiasm and curiosity inspired many of his students and collaborators, who are now Professors and researchers in many institutions. His contributions will outlive us all through the work of the many researchers he trained and worked with.

Sérgio was an avid tennis player and fierce competitor, always happy to beat his brother-in-law Bepe on the court. He was deeply religious and humble despite his enormous scientific contributions. Sérgio also deserves to be remembered for his work as President of the philanthropic organization PUSA – Pia União de Santo Antônio to alleviate poverty and hunger.

His sense of humor and vision were an inspiration and comfort for all those who met him, from the newest student in his lab to the highest authorities in the land. Sérgio never forgot the lessons from his very humble upbringing on a small farm in Monte Mor, SP, and dedicated his life and profession to providing simple and inexpensive solutions to insect problems.

Sérgio was a committed family man who had to struggle as a single parent after the loss of his first wife to cancer at a very young age. He is survived by his wife Sílvia, his son Sérgio Jr. and daughters Vanessa and Marina.

**Italo Delalibera Jr. & Roberto Pereira**