

# Lee M. Hutchins Award

The Lee M. Hutchins Fund was established in 1979 by gifts from the estate of Dr. Lee M. Hutchins. The award, consisting of a certificate and income from the invested fund, is made for the best contribution to basic or applied research on diseases of perennial fruit plants (tree fruits, tree nuts, small fruits and grapes, including tropical fruits but excluding vegetables). The results of the research must have been published in an official journal of the Society.

## Alan R. Biggs



**Alan R. Biggs** was born in Lewisburg, PA. He received a B.S. degree in forest science from The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, and remained at Penn State to complete his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in plant pathology. In 1983 Dr. Biggs joined Agriculture Canada, Research Branch at the Vineland Station in Ontario as a research scientist with responsibilities for tree fruit diseases. In 1987 he was appointed head of the Plant Pathology Section at Vineland. Dr. Biggs moved to his present position at West Virginia University,

Morgantown, in 1989, where he is an associate professor and extension specialist in plant pathology at the University Experiment Farm in Kearneysville.

Dr. Biggs has specialized in the area of wound response and defense mechanisms in woody plants. In 1984 he developed new cytochemical procedures that have enabled researchers to locate and quantify the biopolymer, suberin, in plant cells and tissues

with more precision than was possible previously. By applying this procedure, he characterized a poorly defined region of tissue that forms in the bark of peach during the healing process after injuries or in response to pathogens. This tissue also forms in bark and xylem of 17 other woody species and is required for regeneration of new tissues and, ultimately, the healing of wounds. His work represented the first report that suberin may be a *de novo* component of the wound-reaction zone. The kinetics of suberin accumulation within newly formed tissues exhibited a high degree of correlation with known levels of pathogen resistance in the genotypes examined. This information has taken tree pathologists away from the traditional view of wound-related tissues as passive anatomical defense mechanisms and has focused attention on the importance of the dynamic interaction of biochemistry with anatomy and the intimate association of biochemical factors with the wound-healing process in woody-plant tissues.

During the field tour of the Deciduous Tree Fruit Working Group before the 5th International Congress of Plant Pathology in Kyoto, Japan, in 1988, a colleague saw Alan carrying his young daughter with one hand and a hatchet to scrape tree trunks for his favorite fungus, *Cytospora*. Obviously devoted to his daughter, Alan seemed almost equally devoted to his research, and it is for that devotion that Dr. Biggs is receiving this Lee M. Hutchins Award.