

## The legacy of Te-Tzu (T.T.) Chang

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On **12 March 1988**, [T.T. Chang](#), IRRI's first geneticist (and principal scientist at the time), and [Peter Jennings](#), IRRI's first rice breeder, shared the Rank Prize for Agronomy and Nutrition. In the early days after they were hired by IRRI's first director general, **Robert Chandler**, they quickly assembled a large collection of rice varieties, including the short-statured cultivars from Taiwan. From this early assemblage of germplasm, Jennings made the crosses that ultimately resulted in IR8.



More on Peter in another blog. However, exactly 19 years later on the same date, **12 March 2007**, IRRI's Genetic Resources Center (GRC) was named the *T.T. Chang Genetic Resources Center* in his memory. He had passed away, at age 78, the previous year on **24 March 2006**.

[During a special dedication ceremony that day in 2007](#), attended by



his family (wife Nancy, sons Dean and Jeff, and grandchildren), T.T. was recognized as the founder of IRRI's International Rice Germplasm Center, the predecessor of the GRC, and a world authority on rice genetics and conservation. Up until his retirement in 1991, T.T. had spent 30 years at IRRI collecting and storing rice varieties from all over Asia and the world.

After the dedication ceremony, family members toured the genebank facility that T.T. had nurtured for so many years. The photo above depicts Dean, T.T.'s eldest son, showing a rice sample to his children, Nathan and Erica, as his mother, Nancy, looks on.

During my days as a visiting editor at IRRI in 1982-83, I got to know T.T. quite well and I always enjoyed talking to him. I was planning to fly to Taiwan during the summer of 2006 to do one of my pioneer interviews with him, but unfortunately he passed away that March. I regret not doing the interview sooner. However, when his sons, Dean and Jeff visited IRRI in **April 2010** attend the Institute's 50th anniversary celebration, I was able to [interview both of them](#) (photo) about the legacy of their father.



During that interview, Dean (at left in photo) stated, "The earliest moment

for me to understand in greater context on what my father was doing at IRRI was when the International School Manila would annually send kids on field trips to IRRI because the place was such a gem in terms of doing something important. I think I was in the fifth or sixth grade at the time and we took a field trip to IRRI. We were brought to the auditorium and we viewed a film about IRRI and then my father spoke. At that moment, it was a defining moment or epiphany for me that my father was really someone special and doing some really good work.”