



## Eeva Tapio

\* 10.10.1927 † 25.3.2019

**Eeva Tapio** (née Relander), professor emerita of plant pathology, died in Helsinki on 25th March 2019. Born in Viipuri (Vyborg) on 10th October 1927, she matriculated from the Kotka Lyceum for Girls in 1945, graduated with a degree in agriculture in 1950 and worked initially at the Finnish Agricultural Research Centre while continuing her studies for a doctorate. She held the position of docent in plant pathology at the University of Helsinki from 1970 onwards and later occupied the chair in that subject until her retirement in 1995.

Before Eeva Tapio's time the study and prevention of plant diseases was very much a matter of controlling the damage caused to grain harvests by fungal diseases, but her attention was aroused in particular by viral diseases, which had become more widely known abroad. At the same time the methods of molecular biology had increasingly been made available for the study of plant diseases. In the 1990's Eeva was also instrumental in bringing about the creation of a professorship in forest pathology at the University of Helsinki – a field which had previously belonged to the teaching and research duties of the professor of plant pathology. Above all, she will be remem-

bered for her constructive attitude towards the development of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry.

The encouragement of Nordic cooperation was an important matter for Eeva Tapio, and she was well suited for the task, as she was used to speaking the Scandinavian languages at home. The joint Nordic courses in plant diseases that she initiated in 1980 are still being held regularly.

Eeva Tapio began her schooling in Viipuri, but this was interrupted by the war. By the time the Continuation War broke out in 1941 she was in Denmark with her mother and sisters but demanded to be allowed to return to Finland in spite of her mother's objections. Her father was working at the Kuusankoski military hospital and the 13-year-old Eeva was sent there to help him. It was there that she celebrated her 14th birthday. The evacuation of the family's farm in Sortavala was also left very much to Eeva and her mother, as the men in the family were at the front. Her elder brother was killed in action, in fact, and Eeva made a point of visiting his grave at Luumäki every year on Remembrance Day.

After the war Eeva's parents moved to

Mikkeli, where her father, Tauno Relander, held various positions, including that of chief physician at the city's Regional Hospital. Meanwhile Eeva Tapio started a family with Pekka Tapio, who also had a degree in agriculture, and they settled at Jokiniemi in Vantaa. After her retirement from the University of Helsinki, Eeva Tapio had more time to spend with her grown-up children and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all of whom were very important to her.

At the university it was the students who were most important for Tapio, and she played a significant role in the planning of a multipurpose sports building on the Viikki Campus for the students to use. The building was completed in 1986, the foundation stone having been laid by Tellervo Koivisto, **wife of the President of Finland**, Mauno Koivisto. Later, in 1987, Eeva Tapio was made an honorary member of the agricultural students' association Sampsä. From that time on she eagerly took part in students' celebrations and would regularly invite the association's committee to visit her on her birthday.

After her retirement Eeva Tapio continued her activities in many organizations

until the very last years. She had a knack of getting people to listen to her and making things happen. The women's Lotta organization, a wartime auxiliary and nursing service, was especially important to her as she had served in its young people's branch during the war. She was therefore present when the Lotta tradition was eventually revived and joined the Finnish Minister of Defence, Elisabeth Rehn, in nailing the organization's pennant in place at the Katajanokka Casino in Helsinki. She was invited to membership of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1982 and was made an honorary member in 2008. She was also an honorary member of the Finnish Association of Academic Agronomists and received numerous other awards, beginning with the highest-ranking medal granted by the University of Helsinki.

Perhaps partly on account of having had to abandon her former home in Karelia, Eeva Tapio was extremely keen on matters of national defence. She was summoned to a National Defence Course in 1980 and was elected the senior member of the course, the first woman ever to gain this distinction.

*Obituary by Jari Valkonen  
and Risto Ihamuotila*