

Dear One and All,

I have never been one to have "Heroes" or "Idols", but Dr. Norman Borlaug was just that to me. His passing on Saturday, September 12th after 95 years of life weighs heavy on my heart. He was a devoted, dedicated, passionate, compassionate individual always looking for ways to feed the hungry and impoverished. He never gave up, never retired, and always remained humble and kind. I am blessed to have known him.

Some of you may not know that in 2003 I asked Dr. Borlaug to become an Honorary Board member for Self-Help when he came to Waverly to meet with the board. He gladly accepted this position, and we have been privileged to include his name with the rest of our excellent board.

Over the years Dr. Borlaug and I had phone conversations to discuss thoughts and ideas, challenges and support. And, with each annual World Food Prize event in Des Moines, I was fortunate enough to visit one-on-one with him, catching up and again seeking advice from this wise sage.

During my visit to Nicaragua early this year, the cooperative farmers from our second seed bank now under construction, asked if I thought it would be possible for the seed bank to be named "The Dr. Norman Borlaug Seed Bank", and would I check with him before they sent an official letter. I said that I would be glad to. So upon return I phoned him with this request. Dr. Borlaug's immediate response was, "Of course, Merry. I would be honored." The farmers were thrilled by his acceptance, and sent him the official letter of request with all of their signatures. The November 17th inauguration of the Dr. Norman Borlaug Seed Bank will have even greater meaning.

The last time I spoke to Dr. Borlaug was in July, shortly before I traveled to Ghana. (Self-Help's work in Ghana came by Dr. Borlaug's invitation for Self-Help to assist in work he was engaged in there.) During our conversation, I was again reminded how he loved to converse, and that he was never too busy to listen to people from all walks of life. Borlaug told me to keep up the good work that Self-Help International is doing, and reminded me that "big" isn't necessarily better. (I am sure that he said that because he always marveled at how small our budget was, yet how much we are able to accomplish.)

Before saying goodbye, I told him that I looked forward to seeing him at the World Food Prize this October. He said, "I sure hope that I can attend and visit with you some more." I sure wish that were true.

I invite you to read "Borlaug" online in the Des Moines Register today, Monday September 14th.. It is worth the read.

A giant has left this world, but his works continue.

Very sincerely,

Merry Fredrick  
Executive Director