

George F. Weber, 1894-1976

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Dr. George Frederick Weber, Professor Emeritus of Plant Pathology at the University of Florida, died at his home in Gainesville on December 8, 1976. He was born in Alexandria, South Dakota on May 19, 1894. Dr. Weber received the B.S. degree at South Dakota State University in 1916, and was married to the late Kate Caldwell in 1917. He

served in the U.S. Army from 1916 to 1918, attaining the rank of Captain. He was a member of the American Expeditionary Force in Europe and was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* for bravery in action. Following his military service, he entered the graduate school at the University of Wisconsin to study Plant Pathology. He was awarded the M.S. degree in 1920, the Ph.D. in 1922. The same year he joined the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station as vegetable plant pathologist.

Dr. Weber did pioneering research on the diseases of vegetables and field crops in Florida, and published many Experiment Station Bulletins to inform growers about plant diseases and their control. He authored more than 110 research papers during his 42 years of service. Following his retirement in 1964, he remained active and, in 1973, published a reference book, "Bacterial and Fungal Diseases of Plants in the Tropics." In addition to conducting research, he played an important role in the teaching of Plant Pathology.

Professor Weber initiated several programs in resident instruction and was the first Plant Pathologist to teach elementary Plant Pathology on a continuing schedule. He prepared more than 2,000 preserved museum specimens and approximately the same number of herbarium specimens of diseased plants. Many of his specimens are still used regularly in classrooms and laboratories. Weber was the first to teach forest pathology and advanced courses in the diseases of agronomic and horticultural crop plants. He also initiated the first course in nematology at the University of Florida. When he perceived the need for instruction in nematology he, in his characteristic meticulous way, prepared himself by enrolling as a student in a summer workshop on nematology. Dr. Weber initiated advanced degree programs in Plant Pathology at the University of Florida. The M.S. program was begun in the mid-1940's and the Ph.D. program a decade later.

Although he was interested in the broad area of plant diseases, Dr. Weber specialized in the study and control of diseases found in tropical climates throughout the world. Many students from foreign countries came to Florida to study with him.

Dr. Weber was recognized for his achievements not only in Florida, but also nationally and internationally. In 1964, he received the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association Outstanding Research award for his studies of diseases of vegetables grown in Florida. He served as Vice President and President of the American Phytopathological Society and its Southern Division. He was among the first elected Fellow of the American Phytopathological Society. In 1976, the Florida Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services recognized his services to the state by presenting him the Award of Eminence for Plant Protection.

By executive proclamation, the Governor of South Dakota declared June 12, 1976 as "George Weber Day" in recognition of his contributions to Plant Pathology and to his alma mater in the development of the museum, Heritage Center, at South Dakota State University.

Dr. Weber was an indefatigable worker, always urging students and fellow workers to excel in their studies and research projects. He was an active member of many scientific societies, including the American Phytopathological Society, American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Florida Academy of Science, Sigma Xi, Gamma Sigma Delta, Phi Sigma, Gamma Alpha, Phi Kappa Phi, Botanical Society of America, Mycological Society of America, American Institute of Biological Sciences, American Association of University Professors, and the American Legion. He served as a consultant to the office of Scientific Research and Development of the Quartermaster Corps of the U.S. Army during World War II. Dr. Weber's biography appears in *Who's Who in America*.

Dr. Weber was active in student affairs and took a keen interest in counseling programs. He was truly a friend and advisor to students and young staff members. He not only advised his students academically and professionally, but also served for years as faculty advisor to the active members of his social fraternity, Delta Tau Delta.

Dr. Weber was active in intercollegiate athletics. He served ten years as assistant football coach at Florida during his early tenure and served as time keeper at all track meets held at the University during his 42 years with the University of Florida.

His zeal for his profession of Plant Pathology and his many community services will be sorely missed.