

Lexemuel Ray Hesler, 1888-1977

A. J. Sharp



Dr. Hesler, a charter member of the American Phytopathological Society, was born February 20, 1888, near Veedersburg, Indiana. He finished high school there and went to Wabash College where he was greatly influenced by Professor Mason B. Thomas and Jacob R. Schramm. He received the A. B. degree with a major in botany in June 1911.

During that summer he served at the field station at Sodus, New York.

The following January he entered the Graduate School in Plant Pathology at Cornell University. Working with Dr. H. R. Whetzel, he received the Ph.D. degree in 1914. At Cornell he served as a Fellow, 1912; Instructor, 1912-1914; and Assistant Professor, 1914-1919. In 1914 he married Esther Lillian Collins who survives him.

He accepted an appointment in 1919 as Professor and Head of the Department of Botany at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where he remained the rest of his life. From 1934, he served as Dean of Liberal Arts until his retirement in 1958.

He began publishing plant pathology research in 1911, his first paper (co-authored by Blodgett and Wallace) appearing in the first volume of *Phytopathology*. Subsequently he published 40 other contributions, at times with others, and a book on fruit diseases (Hesler, L.

R., and H. R. Whetzel. 1917. *Manual of fruit diseases*. Macmillan, New York. 462 p.) which remained a classic for some time.

Until he became Dean at the University of Tennessee he taught Plant Pathology, but about 1930 his interests began to change toward mycology. He published over 60 mycological titles, six of which were books. Three of these were books co-authored by A. H. Smith; one more on *Lactarius* is yet to appear. Much of his later work was subsidized by the National Science Foundation.

Early Dr. Hesler held several short-term appointments: (i) Specialist, Federal Experiment Station, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico; (ii) Specialist, United States Department of Agriculture; (iii) Fellow and Associate Plant Pathologist, Ohio Agriculture Experiment Station, Wooster.

Dr. Hesler's work was highly esteemed, and he received many honors: an honorary Doctor of Laws from Wabash College, and memberships in Sigma Xi, Phi Beta Kappa, Gamma Alpha, Phi Kappa Phi, and Alpha Zeta. An International Mycological Symposium held in Tennessee in honor of his eightieth year was attended by many famous international as well as national colleagues.

His most extensive writing was done following his retirement; he continued working until five months before his death. A bibliography will be published in *MYCOLOGIA*.

Remarkable in many ways, he contributed greatly to scholarship in plant pathology, mycology, and botany. He was greatly appreciated by all who knew him as an excellent teacher, a good friend, and a gentleman.