

## Edward K. Sobers, 1922–1988

Donald H. Sumner, Durham K. Bell, R. P. Esser, and S. A. Alfieri, Jr.



Dr. Edward Kenneth Sobers was born October 31, 1922, in Catawqua, Pennsylvania. His parents died six months apart when he was nine years old, and he was raised by an aunt and uncle in Northampton, PA. His early education was at Girard College, a boys school for orphans in Philadelphia. Later, Ed attended Louisiana Polytechnical Institute and earned a B.S. in zoology in 1948.

He received an M.S. in botany in 1953 and a Ph.D. in plant pathology in 1958 from Louisiana State University.

One of the strong influences in Ed's career was his association with Dr. A. G. Plakidas, a junior author on one of Ed's papers, of whom he often spoke as one of the guiding lights in his career. Ed taught science courses in colleges for several years, first as an assistant professor in biological sciences at F. T. Nicholls State College in Thibodaux, LA, from 1958 to 1960, and then as an assistant professor of bacteriology at Northwestern State College in Natchitoches, LA, from 1960 to 1962. He served as a plant pathologist with the Florida Department of Agriculture from 1962 to 1965. In the role of plant pathologist at the Division of Plant Industry (DPI), Ed was an aggressive, competitive, productive, dedicated scientist. He was unique in motivating and inspiring others, students and co-professionals alike, to seek what was beyond the surface. In his short tenure with the DPI, Ed published 26 papers, leading all DPI scientists. He had a keen sense of humor, and a pleasant cheerful, personality. It was a pleasure to be around, and particularly to collaborate with him. Ed joined the faculty in the Plant Pathology Department at the University of Georgia Coastal Plain Experiment Station in Tifton as an assistant professor in 1965, and was promoted to an associate professor in 1969. He served as associate editor of *Phytopathology* from 1973 to 1975.

Ed had an international reputation as an authority on the genus *Cylindrocladium*. While at the CPES, he authored or co-authored 11 articles on *Cylindrocladium* including descriptions of one combination nova and four species novae. Also there was one each combination nova and species nova in *Calonectria*, the teleomorph of *Cylindrocladium*. In chronology, these included *Cylindrocladium crotalariae* comb. nov. (Loos) Bell & Sobers

(teleomorph, *Calonectria crotalariae* comb. nov. (Loos) Bell & Sobers), pathogen on pegs, pods, and roots of *Arachis hypogaea* L. 1966; *Cylindrocladium floridanum* sp. nov. Sobers & Seymour (teleomorph, *Calonectria floridana* sp. nov. Sobers, which Sobers later reduced to synonym with *C. kyotensis* Terashita), pathogen on roots of *Prunus persica* L., 1967, 1969, 1972; *Cylindrocladium ellipticum* sp. nov. Alfieri, Seymour & Sobers, pathogen on leaves of *Mahonia bealei* Carr., 1970; *Cylindrocladium avesiculatum* sp. nov. Gill, Alfieri & Sobers pathogen on leaves of *Ilex cornuta* Lindl. & Paxt. and *I. vomitoria* Ait., 1971; and *Cylindrocladium heptaseptatum* sp. nov. Sobers, Alfieri & Knauss, pathogen on fronds of *Polystichum adiantiforme* (Forst.) J. E. Sm., 1975.

He authored or co-authored four articles on the phytopathology and avian toxicity of *Alternaria longipes* (Ell. & Ev.) Mason (= *Alternaria alternaria* (Fries) Keissler), the brown spot pathogen of tobacco. In these publications, pathogenicity and virulence of the fungus to tobacco were correlated with conidial morphology, and the degree of toxicity of fungal infested corn to day-old chicks was correlated with virulence.

He was a consistent participant at National and Southern Division APS meetings, and made 10 personal presentations. He joined the Georgia Academy of Science and attended their meetings. He thought highly of the Florida Division of Plant Industry, the Florida Horticultural Society and the scientists in both. That the feelings were mutual was reflected in the numbers of co-authored articles and abstracts and person-to-person interchange among them.

Ed was an excellent photographer. He would cheerfully spend hours trying different types of film, lighting, camera settings, grades of paper, processing chemicals, and drying procedures to obtain the quality glossy black-and-white prints he wanted. Then he would spend more hours making and mounting composite photographs of considerable detail.

His writing skill was such that in three to four hours of actual writing time he could produce a finished quality manuscript. His suggestions and help in photography and composition were in constant demand and, to his credit, he very rarely refused.

Ed's research, while he was actively pursuing it, was his vocation and avocation. During his career, he published more than 85 articles and made numerous presentations at scientific meetings. He retired from the university in 1979 to pursue other interests. He died December 9, 1988 in Jonesboro, GA, and is survived by his wife Katherine, his eleven children, and his four sisters.