

Robert S. Dickey, 1921–1991

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Robert S. Dickey, Professor Emeritus of Plant Pathology, Cornell University, died at his home in Prescott, Arizona, on 1 July 1991.

Professor Dickey was born on 18 January, 1921, in Riverside, California. He received his early education in public schools in Riverside, after which he attended Riverside Junior College where he earned an A.A. degree in 1941. In 1948 he was awarded the B.S. degree in plant science and in 1954 a Ph.D. in plant pathology at the University of California, Berkeley.

His doctoral thesis research dealt with several aspects of the crown gall disease caused by *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*.

From September 1942 to January 1946 Professor Dickey was in military service. He served as regimental intelligence officer and company commander in the 39th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division in Europe where he participated in four military campaigns. Four decorations were awarded to him for heroic action; two of these were awarded by the Belgium government. His discharge from the United States Army was with the rank of captain.

Bob Dickey joined the Department of Plant Pathology at Cornell as an assistant professor in 1952. From 1952 to 1954 he served as extension specialist in charge of cereal, potato, and forage crop diseases. He was plant pathology extension project leader from 1954 to 1958 with additional responsibilities for preparing plant disease survey reports, for being in charge of the Plant Pathology Extension Office, and planning extension conferences. With the retirement of W. H. Burkholder, Professor Dickey moved to a research/teaching position dealing with plant diseases caused by bacteria. From 1959 until his retirement in 1987, he carried out research and taught courses in bacterial plant diseases and phytopathogenic bacteria. Research on bacterial diseases of plants included the diagnosis, pathogen identification, epidemiology, and control of bacterial diseases as well as the host-pathogen interaction during pathogenesis. His investigations of phytopathogenic bacteria were concerned primarily with the taxonomy and physiology of various genera, species, and strains. A limited collection of selected bacterial cultures also was maintained as an integral part of the program.

One of Professor Dickey's first research projects on bacterial diseases of plants at Cornell was on the wilt disease of carnation caused by *Pseudomonas caryophylli*. The results of this research were published with his co-workers and graduate students in a series of papers in Phytopathology covering all aspects of this disease. An important finding from this research by Professor Dickey and his graduate student, C. W. D. Brathwaite, was the discovery of the synergism between *Pseudomonas caryophylli* and *Corynebacterium* species in causing maceration of carnation stem

tissue. Another of Professor Dickey's major research interests was the genus *Erwinia*, particularly *E. carotovora* subsp. *carotovora* and *E. c. chrysanthemi*. A series of papers were published dealing with the effects of these organisms on chrysanthemum, *Musa paradisiaca*, *Zea mays*, and other host plants as well as work on the taxonomy of this genus.

Professor Dickey was an active participant in international meetings and programs dealing with bacterial diseases of plants. In 1971 he was awarded a New York State College of Agriculture Traveling Fellowship to attend the Third International Conference of Plant Pathogenic Bacteria in The Netherlands and to visit research laboratories in Denmark and The Netherlands. He was discussion session organizer and chairman for the ecology of bacterial plant pathogens at the 2nd International Congress of Plant Pathology and on the organizing committees for bacteriology for the 3rd and 4th International Congresses of Plant Pathology held in 1978 and 1983, respectively. He also served on the executive committee for the International Group on Plant Pathogenic Bacteria, the Committee on Taxonomy of Plant Pathogenic Bacteria and the *Erwinia* (Soft Rot) Working Group.

Professor Dickey served his University and The American Phytopathological Society in a number of ways. He served on numerous university, college, and department committees at Cornell. He served his professional society as councilor of the Northeast Division, as associate editor of *Plant Disease*, as a member and as secretary-treasurer of the Committee on Phytopathological Classics, and on numerous committees dealing with plant pathogenic bacteria and bacterial diseases of plants.

Professor Dickey was appointed a member of the graduate faculty in the Department of Plant Pathology at The Pennsylvania State University in January, 1970, and an adjunct professor of that department in July, 1974. He was retained in those positions until retirement in 1987.

He was an excellent teacher and his courses on bacterial plant pathogens and bacterial plant diseases were well organized and thorough in subject matter covered. Although he was a firm taskmaster, students came away from his courses with a thorough grounding and understanding of plant pathogenic bacteria and bacterial diseases of plants. His devotion to teaching was further demonstrated by the fact that a portion of each of the three sabbatic leaves he took was devoted to course revision and improvement.

In 1946 he married Muriel F. Duffy who survives along with three sons, Paul of Meadville, PA, Mark of Buffalo, NY, and David of San Francisco, CA, one sister and a grandson.

Bob Dickey was known for his integrity and for the thoroughness and accuracy of his research. His advice and assistance were sought regularly by his colleagues, and he was generous with his time in offering assistance. Many of us regret the loss of a scientific colleague but more important is the loss of a good friend who was willing to discuss a variety of topics and listen patiently to the concerns of his friends. Bob will be sorely missed by his many colleagues and friends in plant pathology.