

George Flippo Gravatt, 1891-1969

Curtis May



Forest Pathologist and Horticulturist George Flippo Gravatt, born at Roanoke, Virginia, April 26, 1891, died May 19, 1969, after a long illness. His continuous membership in The American Phytopathological Society spanned the years 1912 to 1958. He received his B.A. degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute in 1911 and his M.A. degree in 1912. He served

in the United States Navy from 1917 to 1919. He began work in the USDA in 1912 and served for 46 years, mostly in the former Division of Forest Pathology of the Bureau of Plant Industry. Problems related to the protection of American forests and shade trees from foreign diseases were his chief professional interests and responsibility. In this area, his research included contributions to our knowledge of the introduced diseases chestnut blight, white pine blister rust, Dutch elm disease, and palm diseases. He was author or co-author of more than 100 important papers on these subjects. His main contribution centered around chestnut blight, on which he was an international authority. The role of the "ink disease" of chestnut in the recession of *Castanea dentata* before the introduction of *Endothia parasitica* was also one of the intriguing problems on which he worked. Mr. Gravatt promoted enthusiastically all breeding work designed to produce desirable blight-resistant forest and nut-tree chestnuts.

He transferred in 1952 to the Fruit and Nut Crops Branch of the Crops Research Division. From that time until his retirement he promoted vigorously the breeding and selection of orchard type, blight-resistant chestnuts.

In the Division of Forest Pathology, his responsibil-

ities included a wide range of administrative activities and long-range program planning at which he was unusually effective. He was USDA representative at several International Chestnut Congresses in the 1950's. During World War II, he assisted our war effort through his work on cinchona, a source of tannin, then in short supply as a result of the destruction of our forest chestnut.

Flippo, as he was generally known to his friends, had a wide range of interests. He had a great reverence for nature, was particularly active in Nature Conservancy, and served on its Board of Directors. Largely through his efforts, Nature Conservancy succeeded in saving the threatened Battle Creek Cypress Swamp, a unique ecologic formation in Calvert County, Maryland. In 1965 the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, declared it a Registered National Landmark.

Flippo was a member of the Holly Society of America, Society of American Foresters, Washington Academy of Sciences, and the Botanical Society of Washington of which he was President in 1938. In 1937, he established and subsequently developed Scientists Cliffs on Chesapeake Bay in Calvert County. Residents there are scientists and other professional people having a broad interest in conservation problems. In 1969, the Smithsonian Institute of Natural History presented Mr. Gravatt an award "in appreciation of valuable services rendered as a volunteer assistant in scientific pursuits of the museum". His quiet enthusiasm, high ethical standards and helpfulness to his colleagues were outstanding characteristics.

Mr. Gravatt leaves his wife, Anne, formerly forest pathologist of the Bureau of Plant Industry and later editor in the Crops Research Division, and two sisters, Mrs. Gilbert F. Miles of Scientists Cliffs and St. Petersburg, Florida, and Mrs. E. F. McLaughlin of St. Petersburg, Florida.