

John Jacob Natti, 1914-1971

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John Jacob Natti, professor of plant pathology at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Cornell University, in Geneva, New York, died of a sudden coronary arrest on April 9, 1971.

He was born September 5, 1914 in Gloucester, Massachusetts, the son of Finnish immigrants. After completing his elementary and secondary schooling in Gloucester, he entered Essex County Agricultural School from which he was graduated in 1935, at the depth of the Great Depression. Unable to continue his education because of finances, he then operated a market garden and poultry farm for five years. From this source he acquired sufficient funds by 1940 to enter the University of Massachusetts, which awarded him in 1944 the B.S. degree in agronomy and chemistry. Following graduation, he accepted a position with the United States Rubber Company as assistant chemist in the Agricultural Chemicals Division, where his duties comprised the development and testing of chemicals as candidate fungicides for control of plant diseases. During this period he became interested in plant disease pathogens and determined to devote his career to their study and control. In 1946, he entered graduate school at Cornell University, which awarded him the Ph.D. in plant pathology in 1951. He immediately

accepted an appointment as assistant professor at New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, where he was promoted to associate professor in 1954, and to professor in 1960.

His research at Geneva dealt with a wide spectrum of fungal and bacterial diseases of vegetables, and resulted in sixty-two publications. Long before the dangers of fungicide pollution were recognized as a serious problem, he strove to achieve disease control without chemicals by identifying and selecting individual plants with resistance to disease. After stabilizing this property by intensive breeding and selection, he released materials to commercial seedsmen for development of new and improved varieties. Many cabbage, broccoli, and snap-bean varieties currently grown in New York are descended from Professor Natti's selections.

His interests were wide and varied. He played an active role in church affairs, variously serving as teacher and superintendent of Sunday School, deacon, and elder of the First Presbyterian Church. He devoted much time to the Boy Scouts and Little League. He was a talented landscape painter, a keen and skillful bridge player, and an excellent conversationalist with a dry, subdued humor.

John was a member of The American Phytopathological Society, Phi Kappa Phi, and Sigma Xi. He served as chairman of the Geneva Chapter of Sigma Xi in 1962 and 1963.

He is survived by his wife, Lora Patricia, and three children, John Martin, Thomas Alexander, and Elizabeth Anne.