

Harvey Earl Thomas, 1890-1974

Stephen Wilhelm, M. W. Gardner and R. D. Raabe



On June 13, 1974, Harvey Earl Thomas, Professor Emeritus of Plant Pathology at the University of California, Berkeley, and retired Plant Pathologist in the California Agricultural Experiment Station, died after a brief illness. He was a man of many interests, a great teacher, and friend of students; he possessed a dignity and handsome

attractiveness that drew people to him. He went out of his way to be friendly, continually gave of himself, and never expected anything in return. Growers esteemed him. With colleagues he was affable, cooperative, and a veritable storehouse of knowledge.

Some of us recall with gratitude and fondness his field trips into apple orchards of California; his phenomenal memory, even for specific trees, his keen wit, the twinkle in his sharp eyes, and even his familiar leather jacket and boots are not forgotten. In the evenings on those trips he would never tire of reminiscing about earlier days in plant pathology. No pathologist or publication escaped his scrutiny.

Born of a farm background, at Grant, Virginia, on 18 November, 1890, he received his B.S. and M.S. degrees in 1915 and 1916 from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute. After spending a year as plant pathologist at the Puerto Rico Agricultural Experiment Station at Mayaguez, he entered Columbia University in 1918, earned the Ph.D. degree in 1920, and became Extension Professor of Plant

Pathology at Cornell University. In 1921, Thomas moved to Pennsylvania State College as Assistant Professor of Plant Pathology and returned the following year to Cornell University where he remained nearly ten years. He became distinguished for and never tired of doing research on diseases of apple and pear.

In 1931, Thomas joined the staff of the Division of Plant Pathology at the University of California, Berkeley, primarily to work on fireblight of pears and apples. He and P. A. Ark worked out the important relation of sugar content of the nectar to the invasiveness of the bacteria. He also studied scab and *Dematophora* root rot of pears; cedar apple rust, *Xylaria* root rot, blotch, nematode injury, mosaic, flat limb, and spray injury of apples; sickle leaf and boron deficiency of olives; rust, armillaria root rot, buckskin, yellow bud mosaic, willow twig, and ring pox of stone fruits; camellia flower blight; and rose mosaic. In his later years he worked primarily with virus diseases of fruit trees, and with jocular irony he facetiously applied to viruses such names as *Inops consilii*, *Festina lente*, *Aegrescit medendo*, *Vulnus immedicabile*, and *Arcana coelestia*. He retired from the University of California in 1958.

Harvey Earl Thomas will long be remembered and respected for his devotion to plant pathology, his character, and his common sense.

Thomas was a member of The American Phytopathological Society, AAAS, Botanical Society of America, Sigma Xi, and Gamma Alpha. He is survived by two daughters, Elaine (Mrs. Frank Stetson of Visalia, California), and Christine (Mrs. Charles O. King, Jr., of Berkeley, California), and five grandchildren.