

## Ernest Victor Abbott, 1899–1980

James E. Irvine



Ernest Victor Abbott died peacefully on September 9, 1980. He had spent the morning in his garden, working on the daylilies to whose propagation and breeding he had devoted much interest during his retirement.

Dr. Abbott was born in Ashland, Oregon, in 1899. After completing his early schooling, he served as an officer during World War I. He completed his formal education at Oregon State University (B.S.) and Iowa State University (M.S. and Ph.D.). As a young plant pathologist, he worked

successively at the Louisiana State Agricultural Experiment Station, at Iowa State University, and at La Molina Experiment Station, Lima, Peru, before joining the U.S. Sugarcane Field Station, Houma, Louisiana, in 1930. Here, he served as research plant pathologist and, from 1950 until his retirement in 1966, as superintendent.

Dr. Abbott identified mosaic as a disease of sugarcane in Peru and chlorotic streak and ratoon stunting disease in Louisiana. He developed techniques for screening sugarcane varieties for red rot and sugarcane seedlings for mosaic resistance, and identified new strains of mosaic virus when resistant cultivars became infected.

Dr. Abbott was deeply involved in the development of new cultivars, and selected CP 44-101, a cultivar that dominated the Louisiana industry and remains popular in a number of subtropical countries. He was the author of numerous important scientific publications, and he served as an editor for and contributor to the authoritative *Sugarcane Diseases of the World*. He traveled extensively throughout the sugarcane-producing countries of the world and contributed much to the identification of sugarcane diseases. He served for many years on the American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists Standing Committee of *Sugarcane Diseases of the World*.

Since his career began, Louisiana's sugar recovery has increased by one-third, yields of sugar per acre have doubled, and sugar production has tripled. Dr. Abbott's personal research and his leadership of an effective research organization have contributed heavily to these gains. He received the USDA's Superior Service Award and the sugar industry's St. James award. He was elected a Fellow of the American Phytopathological Society and a Life Member of the American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists.

Dr. Abbott will be remembered by friends and colleagues as a devoted scientist and a gentleman, kindly and unassuming, who had the respect and admiration of all who had the privilege of knowing him. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth; their daughter, Ruth (Mrs. Keith Remy); three grandchildren (David, Carol, and Nancy); and his sister, Hannah Sylter.