

## Edward Marshall Johnson, 1896-1982

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Dr. Edward Marshall Johnson, Emeritus Professor of plant pathology at the University of Kentucky, died in Lexington, Kentucky, on May 6, 1982. Although he was a native of Ohio (born on February 2, 1896, in West Union in Adams County) he was virtually a lifelong Kentuckian as he was quite young when the family moved across the Ohio River to Vanceburg in Lewis County, Kentucky, where he grew up and received his elementary and high school education.

Ed received the baccalaureate degree from the University of Kentucky in 1921 after majoring in soils in the Agronomy Department. He continued studying soils and soil fertility during the next two years and received an M.S. degree in 1923. Research for his thesis included analyses of rainfall for ammonium and nitrate nitrogen and, especially, sulfur, not out of concern about pollution of the agricultural environment, but to satisfy his desire to know the contribution of these elements in rainfall to fertility of soils in various locations in Kentucky. On August 1, 1923 he was appointed Assistant in Agronomy and began his 43-year-long professional career at the University.

While Ed was an undergraduate student, the University's first plant pathologist, W. D. Valleau, joined the faculty of the Agronomy Department. His interest in soilborne pathogens of corn and tobacco and Ed's interest in soil fertility and plant nutrition led to a collaboration that lasted for nearly 40 years. Ed's transition from agronomist to plant pathologist was soon

complete and, after some early work with root rot of corn and frencing of tobacco, he became immersed in sorting and classifying virus diseases of tobacco. This work, some of it done while on a sabbatical leave, comprised the dissertation research for the Ph.D. degree he received from the University of Minnesota in 1930. It was published as the classic, *Virus Diseases of Tobacco in Kentucky*, Research Bulletin 306 of the University of Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station.

A plant pathologist in Kentucky was expected to concentrate on diseases of tobacco, and Ed made significant contributions to our knowledge and control of many of them, especially tobacco mosaic, black root rot, wildfire, and black shank. However, he did not limit his interests and activities to tobacco. He applied his keen powers of observation and skill in handling plants and plant pathogens to studies of diseases of many other plants. Although he rarely participated in formal classroom instruction, he was a gracious teacher who was always available on an informal basis, and there are numerous plant pathologists, former graduate students, and newly arrived young faculty, who are grateful for having had the opportunity to learn from him.

He set the example for the plant disease diagnostic service that evolved along with the present department from a section of the Department of Agronomy. During the later years of his career he applied most of his talents to this service. He was a quiet, unassuming bachelor who gave all of his time to his profession and the university. He took an active part in campus chapters of honorary and scientific societies, and served as secretary of the American Phytopathological Society from 1945 to 1947. He retired from the university in 1966, leaving a legacy of devoted service to his fellow Kentuckians. This, he felt, was his primary duty as a plant pathologist.