

Dewey Stewart, 1898-1984

Martha Kotila Roane and Muriel J. O'Brien



Dewey Stewart, son of Wiley and Mary Jane Shaneyfelt Stewart, was born December 4, 1898, in Eva, Alabama, and died May 7, 1984, in Washington, DC, where he made his home. He was a member of the American Phytopathological Society, Botanical Society of America, American Society of Sugar Beet Technologists, American Society of Agronomy, American Genetics Association, Washington Academy of Science, Institut Internationale Recherches Betteraveieres, Acacia,

Sigma Xi, Gamma Sigma Delta, and Phi Sigma Biological Society.

He was the first federal employee to serve as the president of the American Society of Sugar Beet Technologists and the Society bestowed on him their Meritorious Service Award in 1958. He received a Superior Service Award from the USDA in 1959 and shared in a USDA Unit Superior Service Award in 1968 for development of monogerm cultivars. Mr. Stewart retired December 31, 1968, as Leader, Sugar Beet Investigations, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, after 43 years of service.

He earned a B.A. degree from Auburn University in 1922 and his M.S. degree from Michigan State University in 1924. He completed further graduate work at Cornell University where he was the chief assistant to Professor H. H. Whetzel. He also took courses at the University of Maryland.

Mr. Stewart's career with the U.S. Department of Agriculture began in 1925 at the time Dr. G. H. Coons was planning an enlarged program of research on sugar beet production for the department. His first assignment was in sugar beet research at Rocky Ford, Colorado, where he remained until 1928 when he was transferred to Fort Collins, Colorado. His studies in Colorado showed that the

most promising and economic control of *Cercospora* leaf spot was the production of resistant cultivars. He, therefore, concentrated on a breeding program to produce such cultivars. In 1932, he was transferred to the Plant Industry Station at Arlington Farm, Virginia, the present site of the Pentagon. The leaf spot breeding project was expanded at that time to include other phases of sugar beet breeding work. It was further accelerated when the Plant Industry Station was moved to Beltsville, Maryland.

Mr. Stewart became leader of Sugar Beet Investigations in 1955 upon the retirement of G. H. Coons. He was responsible for a broad national program of research. Under his leadership his unit played an important role in developing the monogerm sugar beet.

Mr. Stewart was an author of 65 publications. He produced cultivars with combined leaf spot and black root resistance and others with combined resistance to curly top and leaf spot. Early in his career, he demonstrated heterosis in sugar beet hybrids. He discovered a *Fusarium* yellows disease of sugar beets in southeastern Colorado. Mr. Stewart is credited with the first viable interspecific hybrid between *Beta procumbens*, a wild beet with resistance to nematodes, and the sugar beet.

After retiring at the then mandatory retirement age of 70, Mr. Stewart continued for over 15 years under a collaborator's appointment and pursued his interest in the breeding of disease-resistant sugar beets.

In 1927, Mr. Stewart married Anita Norman who died in 1973. He is survived by two daughters, Anita Speight of Beltsville, Maryland, and Dr. Helen Faller of Huntsville, Alabama; a son, Dr. John W. Stewart of Pittsford, New York; a half-brother, W. L. Grubbs of Florence, Alabama; six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

We remember Mr. Stewart as a gentle man in the truest sense of the word, devoted to his family, a wonderful friend. He always had a smile and a twinkle in his eyes, especially when telling us about his experiences with "Prof." Whetzel and Dr. Coons.