

Robert Marshall Pratt, 1916–1987

Leon J. Tyler and Carl W. Boothroyd

Robert Marshall Pratt, 71, died April 21, 1987. He was born January 18, 1916 in Pasadena, California, attended elementary schools there, and graduated from high school in Los Angeles in June 1933. He enrolled in the University of California, Los Angeles, in the fall of 1933, where he majored in subtropical agriculture. After completing this major he transferred to the University of California, Berkeley, where he was granted a bachelor of science degree in 1937. After two seasons with the USDA, Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantines, he returned to UCLA in February 1939 for one year of graduate study in horticultural science. In February 1940 he was appointed agricultural inspector in San Diego County, California. He held that position until July 1943.

In the fall of 1943 Dr. Pratt entered Cornell University and completed the requirements for the Ph.D. degree in plant pathology in 1950. In a rather unique situation he became director of research for the Hardie Manufacturing Company in Hudson, Michigan, before graduation. This company produced pesticidal application equipment. During 1948–1950 he carried on experiments involving fungicide deposits and fruit tree disease control by spray-dust and mist-spray methods, as opposed to conventional hydraulic spraying. He used data from this work as the basis of his Ph.D. thesis.

In 1950 Dr. Pratt accepted a position as associate professor of entomology-plant pathology, University of Florida, Citrus Experiment Station, Lake Alfred. His research at that station consisted of an ecological survey of citrus insects, mites, and diseases. He organized a program for testing citrus trees for the tristeza virus when that disease was discovered in Florida in the 1950s. His experience with citrus problems culminated in the publication of a book, *Florida Guide to Citrus Insects, Diseases, and Nutritional Disorders in Color*, published by the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station in April 1958. This book was

translated into Spanish and became a popular and useful source of information for citrus growers, research personnel, and extension workers in many countries.

Professionally, Dr. Pratt was a good organizer and implementer of research programs. While in Lake Alfred Dr. Pratt was also very active in community affairs, particularly those involving young people, such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. He was interested in teaching and taught adult education courses in the Polk County School System. He was also involved with church activities and in 1958 became vice-president of a newly formed Florida Presbyterian church in St. Petersburg.

In 1961 Dr. Pratt returned to California and worked with the Division of Plant Industry. He was in charge of plant disease detection in 12 Southern California counties, supervising seasonal personnel and training county agricultural inspectors. He carried on research on the western X disease in Prunus, and on the use of aerial surveying, including use of infrared photography, for plant disease detection. He later became chief of the Bureau of Plant Pathology in Southern California, with headquarters at Riverside. He moved to Sacramento in 1974 and became environmental advisor to the director of food and agriculture, reviewing the relationship of environmental impact studies on agriculture in California.

Dr. Pratt retired in 1979. He continued his work with citrus diseases at the request of the International Service Corporation by traveling to Sri Lanka to organize a citrus nursery program for production of citrus plants. He was a member of the American Phytopathological Society, the International Organization of Citrus Virologists, the International Sierra Club, and the Subtropical Horticultural Society of America and the West Coast. He is survived by his wife, Maxine, and a brother, five daughters, nine grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.