

Howard Spencer “Spence” Potter, 1916–1989

William H. Hooker



Dr. H. S. Potter died March 19, 1989, in his home in Holmes Beach, Florida, at age 73 after a long and courageous struggle against cancer. He served as professor of plant pathology at Michigan State University in research and as Extension specialist with the U.S. Cooperative Extension Service in East Lansing from the time of his appointment in 1956 until his retirement in 1985. After retirement he was technical advisor at Manatee Fruit Company, Palmetto, Florida, growers of flowers

as well as large producers of citrus.

His professional interests centered on diseases of vegetable crops and their control by improving methods of pesticide application compatible with reduction of environmental pollution, increased safety to applicators, and enhanced efficiency of disease control. He worked with aerial applicators of pesticides analyzing and improving their methods of application, and with equipment manufacturers in reducing loss due to uncontrolled drift and associated pollution problems. He was deeply involved in improving distribution of droplet size and extent of coverage on plant leaf surfaces using modifications in nozzle design and electrostatic attraction between droplets and the plant leaf. His research also included application of pesticides through spray irrigation systems and with ground-based machinery. In these endeavors he cooperated closely with the Agricultural Engineering Department of MSU.

Spence's enthusiasm and *joie de vivre* were infectious and he was generous of his time in working with friends and associates. His parents were with the U.S. diplomatic service and he spent

his early years in schools in France and England. He was born in Philadelphia and later moved back to that area. He earned the Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, preceded by the B.S. from Pennsylvania State University and the M.S. from Cornell University. He was a fishery biologist with the Pennsylvania Fish Commission, forest and range ecologist, ARS Forest Service, economic biologist of the U.S. Food and Agricultural Administration, and later with the Department of State for the United Nations. He was an elected member of the French Academy of Science.

Spence was an enthusiast of U.S. history and enjoyed particularly studying and reading about events related to the Revolutionary War. He was, as well, a serious student of U.S. military history. As a skipper of sailing craft, he was an experienced and highly successful competitor, winning his last race in September 1988, on Lake Huron with "The Patriot."

During World War II, Major Potter was honored by the awards, *Croix du Guerre* and by the *Croix de Lorraine*, conferred by the French military for his outstanding service in the Allied Campaign in North Africa, Southern Europe, and Northern France. He served the U.S. Army Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces from January 1941 to December 1945, receiving the Defense Service Medal and three Bronze Battle Stars during the Naples, Foggia, Rome Arno, and Northern France Campaign. After World War II, he was commended for his services in rehabilitation of the shipping and fishing industries of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. After 20 years of service in the U.S. Army Spence retired as Lt. Col. USAR.

He is survived by his wife, Margaret (Peggy) Allen Potter, two daughters, two sons, and three grandchildren.

Those of us privileged to know Spence well mourn the loss of a good friend and respected associate.