

Geoffrey Charles Marks, 1932–1990

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Geoffrey Charles Marks, senior forest pathologist, Department of Conservation and Environment, Victoria, Australia, died suddenly on August 30, 1990, from a heart attack.

Geoff was born in Colombo, Ceylon (later Sri Lanka), on January 3, 1932. After graduating from the University of Ceylon with a B.S. degree with honors in 1956, Geoff began his professional career with the Department of Agriculture in Ceylon, breeding for resistance to rice blast caused by *Pyricularia oryzae*. This

work gained him an opportunity to study for a postgraduate year in Japan in 1959, working with a group in the forefront of crop disease research. His work there led to the award, in 1960, of a Rockefeller Foundation scholarship to the University of Wisconsin where, under the guidance of Professor A. J. Riker, he graduated M.S. in 1961 and Ph.D. in plant pathology in 1963.

After graduation, he migrated with his wife and daughter to Australia and in July 1963 was appointed forest pathologist with the Forests Commission, Victoria. This commenced a long and distinguished career in forest disease research. During his career in Australia he authored or coauthored more than 70 publications and five major books and reviews—a monumental contribution to scientific knowledge. His remarkable ability in diagnosing new diseases stamped him as a leader in his field. He also developed joint programs of research that involved pathologists in other government departments and staff and students of Melbourne, Monash, and Latrobe universities. This helped immeasurably to break down barriers of understanding between the public sector and the universities. He was a great source of inspiration and assistance to the many honors and postgraduate students whose projects he helped initiate and supervise. He was always willing to take university students and staff into the field to establish and review cooperative projects, and these field trips were always

most enjoyable and stimulating. Geoff greatly enjoyed his field work, and often when contemplating the forest scenery during his lunch break, would comment, “and I get paid for this.”

Through his own research and the cooperative research he fostered, Geoff greatly boosted the study in Australia of eucalypt dieback caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and eucalypt leaf diseases. He also taught a course in forest pathology at the Victorian School of Forestry, Creswick, and the University of Melbourne, for which he wrote a detailed handbook. He was a born teacher and enjoyed nothing better than passing on knowledge and ideas to a younger generation of biologists. At the time of his death he was coediting another major book, “Eucalypt Diseases and Disorders,” to be published by CSIRO. This book will be a fitting tribute to Geoff’s outstanding contribution to forest pathology.

Geoff maintained communications with a network of international forest pathologists and friends built up over his years of service to science. He returned to the University of Wisconsin in 1969 as a visiting professor in forest pathology. He attended many national and international conferences, and as an active member of the Australasian Plant Pathology Society, was editor-in-chief of *Australasian Plant Pathology* from 1980 to 1985. He was also one of the major organizers of the Fourth International Congress of Plant Pathology held in Melbourne in 1983.

Many of his colleagues would not know that Geoff was, in his time, a champion swimmer, representing Ceylon at the 1952 Olympic Games at Helsinki and the 1954 Asian Games. He led a full and active life and maintained his ties with Sri Lanka through the Australia Ceylon Fellowship. His love for swimming led him to a great interest in sailing and he spent many hours with his family sailing a small yacht that he built. He also loved music and playing bridge with friends.

Geoff is survived by his wife Diana and two children, Debbie and Paul, of whom he was immensely proud and both of whom have completed distinguished medical degrees. His cheerful enthusiasm, broad-ranging intellect, expertise, and friendly cooperative spirit is sadly missed.