

William H. Hooker, 1914–1994

Donald C. Ramsdell



William J. Hooker, Professor Emeritus, Department of Botany and Plant Pathology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, died in East Lansing on 28 October 1994. Dr. Hooker was born on 30 November 1914 in Sycamore, IL. He earned his bachelor's degree at Northern Illinois University, De Kalb, in 1937. He received his M.S. degree from Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, in 1939 and earned his Ph.D. degree in plant pathology under the direction of J. C.

Walker at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1942. William Hooker married Frances A. Ebel in June of 1939. Mrs. Hooker was an elementary school teacher for over 10 yr in the East Lansing School District and raised three children.

After earning his Ph.D. degree, Dr. Hooker accepted a position as an instructor in plant pathology at the University of Wisconsin in 1943 before working for Del Monte Corporation in Illinois. He joined the faculty at Iowa State University, Ames, in the Department of Plant Pathology, where he worked for 10 yr and served as instructor and assistant and associate professor of plant pathology. In 1955 Dr. Hooker joined the faculty in the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology at Michigan State University, East Lansing, as an associate professor. In 1960 he attained the position of professor.

Dr. Hooker's primary research interests centered around potato diseases. His research dealt with viral, bacterial, fungal, and abiotic (the majority caused by air pollution) diseases. He prided himself on working with disease problems that impact agricultural production, maintaining a balancing act between practical and fundamental research. Although Dr. Hooker did not have a formal extension appointment, he did more than his share of extension work. He was also an excellent teacher. During his career, Dr. Hooker trained 17 graduate students who are now scattered around the world, working in Argentina, India, Greece, Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, and the United States.

Dr. Hooker took a leave of absence from Michigan State in 1979 to work at the International Potato Center in Lima, Peru, and was there until 1982. While there, he was head of the Plant Pathology and Virology groups and was assistant to the director for periods of 1 yr each. He was so well regarded that when C. Ochoa later discovered a new species of potato in the Andes Mountains of Peru, he named it *Solanum bill-hookerii* in Dr. Hooker's honor. During Dr. Hooker's tenure at the International Potato Center, he finished editing and writing the APS *Compendium of Potato Diseases* in English and Spanish. It sold over 13,000 copies worldwide as of 1990.

In addition to working at the International Potato Center, Dr.

Hooker took short-term assignments as a USAID-funded plant pathologist to help with plant pathology programs in Argentina, Uruguay, and Indonesia. He was also the U.S. representative in plant pathology to the Potato Committee of the European Common Market, which met in Canada in 1976.

Dr. Hooker was active in professional societies. He was an associate editor of the APS journal *Phytopathology* from 1953 to 1955 and for the *American Potato Journal* from 1972 to 1974. He served the Potato Association of America on various committees and on the Editorial Review Board. He was elected secretary (1956–1957), president elect (1958), and president (1959) of the Potato Association of America.

While at Michigan State University, Dr. Hooker authored and coauthored more than 60 scientific articles that were published in the journals of the American Phytopathological Society and the *American Potato Journal* plus various technical bulletins. He also carried out sabbatical studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, and at Wageningen Agricultural University, the Netherlands.

Dr. Hooker received several awards and honors acknowledging his contributions to the field of plant pathology. He was awarded Honorary Life Membership in 1968 by the Potato Association of America. For his outstanding work nationally and worldwide, he was made a Fellow of APS in 1980. In recognition of his excellent work on local potato problems in Michigan, he received the Michigan Crop Improvement Honorary Membership in 1985.

In addition to his studies and activities, Dr. Hooker designed and built a microtome for sectioning unfixed plant tissue that facilitates rapid diagnosis of many plant diseases without the laborious task of fixing and paraffin-embedding the tissues. The microtome is manufactured by Lab-Line Instruments, Inc., Melrose Park, IL, under an agreement with Michigan State University.

Dr. Hooker worked regularly with the Michigan Crop Improvement Association from 1955 on in training certified potato seed inspectors and cooperated in seed evaluation in Michigan and Florida. He cooperated with potato breeders at both Iowa State and Michigan State universities in breeding for resistance to several important potato viruses and fungal diseases. Varieties released from these programs include Arenac, Cherokee, Emmet, Michibonne, Michigamme, Michimac, Russet Arenac, and Tawa. Dr. Hooker's outstanding contributions to agriculture in Michigan and to potato pathology worldwide will be put to use long into the future.

Dr. Hooker is survived by his wife Frances, who continues to live in their family home in East Lansing; his two daughters, Mary Frances Golob of Dover-Foxcroft, ME, and Joanne Curtis of Charlevoix, MI; his son, Jim Hooker of Lansing, MI; and two granddaughters and one grandson.