

Victor Harry Dropkin, 1916 to 1995

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The discipline of plant pathology lost a stalwart supporter and productive contributor when Victor Harry Dropkin succumbed to a brain hemorrhage in Minneapolis, MN, on Wednesday, 2 August 1995. Dr. Dropkin was born on Staten Island, NY, on 21 March 1916. He attended local schools and graduated as valedictorian of his high school class. He went to Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, on a full tuition scholarship and earned

his B.S. degree in zoology in 1936. Victor then transferred to the University of Chicago, obtaining his Ph.D. degree in parasitology in 1940. During World War II, he served his country as a civilian instructor in the Air Force, was awarded a commission, and completed his military service as a member of the Sanitary Corps, working on malaria control in the South Pacific.

In the years following the war, Dr. Dropkin taught general biology in the newly formed Roosevelt College, Chicago, as an associate professor. In 1951, he accepted a 2-year fellowship at the Naval Medical Research Institute near Washington DC and developed an interest in nematology. He accepted a position as plant nematologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Hicksville, Long Island, NY, in 1953 and later transferred to Beltsville, MD. In 1969, he was enticed to accept an academic position as a professor in the newly formed Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He developed the state's first program in plant nematology and was selected to be department chair in 1979. He served in this capacity until 1984,

when he returned to the faculty. He retired 1 year later.

Although Dr. Dropkin became fascinated with plant nematology relatively late in his career, his contributions to the discipline were immense. Working primarily with root-knot and cyst nematodes, Victor delved deeply into the mechanisms of host resistance. Didactic by nature, he was a prolific and thoughtful writer of research papers and reviews. His textbook, "Introduction to Plant Nematology," was published in 1980. Victor devoted the first few years of his retirement to revising and expanding the textbook. To the amazement of his wife and many of his friends, he purchased a computer for this purpose and became nimble at using it. The second edition of the text appeared in 1989.

Victor delighted in scientific discourse, both as it applied to training students and postdoctoral associates and in the formal classroom. He taught honors courses to undergraduates for a number of years. Although he was the quintessential gentleman, he never suffered fools gladly, and he was incapable of accepting mediocrity at any level.

Dr. Dropkin helped organize The Society of Nematologists and was elected president. He served as editor, both of the *Journal of Nematology* and of *Phytopathology* and was a Fellow of The Society of Nematologists, The American Phytopathological Society, and The European Society for Nematology. He served on the governing board of The American Institute of Biological Sciences and held active memberships in several other professional societies. Victor is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, and one son, Greg, who resides in England.