

The Jersey-DelMarVa Peninsula Coalition: Forty Years of Professionalism

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As our American Phytopathological Society becomes structurally more complex, we should not overlook the influence and successes of regional alliances of plant pathologists. To my knowledge, one of the oldest alliances was formed among professional plant pathologists in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. The DelMarVa peninsula is commonly thought of as that portion of land between the Chesapeake and Delaware bays and the Atlantic Ocean that includes the entire state of Delaware, the eastern shore of Maryland, and the eastern shore of Virginia.

The DelMarVa peninsula has a diversified agriculture. The principal crops are corn, soybeans, small grains, vegetables, potatoes, and plant nursery products. It also is the site of an \$800 million poultry industry that produces about 11% of all poultry consumed in the United States. For over 40 years, professional plant pathologists within the Jersey-DelMarVa area have gathered for annual meetings, initiated originally by C. M. Haenseler of New Jersey and John W. Heuberger of Delaware.

Because plant diseases of this coastal area are similar, it was felt that meetings of plant pathologists to discuss mutual problems would be beneficial. Objectives were to share data and discuss recommendations for controlling plant diseases in this multistate region. Beginning as they did during World War II, the early meetings were primarily concerned with the practical and applied side of plant pathology. An increase in wartime agricultural production was all-important. The first meetings dealt primarily with fruit and vegetables diseases; in later years, ornamentals and field crops were included.

The exact date of the first meeting has not been established, but B. H. Davis has a record of attending a 1-day session at the University of Delaware on 17 January 1945. He is fairly certain there were previous meetings, perhaps as early as 1943. Most of the time was spent presenting data obtained from field experiments conducted during the previous seasons. L. O. "Cy" Weaver recalls that the initial purpose was to exchange information to avoid unnecessary duplication of field studies. Meetings also brought pathologists up to date on the effectiveness of new pesticides.

Dr. Davis recalls that all members of the Rutgers University Department of Plant Pathology participated; he and Dr. Haenseler, John C. Campbell, and R. H. Daines regularly attended from New Jersey. Tom Nugent recalls that he and George H. Cook attended meetings of plant pathologists at the New Jersey experiment station around the time of World War II, probably 1937 and 1942. Dr. Weaver of Maryland recalls that the first meeting of the group occurred about 1940 "more or less," but the regular annual meetings began about 1946. Dr.

Heuberger, Sid Cox, H. William Crittenden, Russell Hyre, and Donald F. Crossan, all from Delaware, were participants during the early 1950s. Later, graduate students were invited to attend and discuss their thesis research.

Spencer H. Davis's first memory of a Jersey-DelMarVa pathologists meeting was one held in Norfolk, Virginia, in the spring of 1948. He also remembers early meetings held at Norfolk, Newark, and Rutgers. For a few years, meeting locations alternated among Rutgers, the University of Maryland, the University of Delaware, and Norfolk, but the University of Delaware was selected as the permanent meeting site after 1949, owing to its central location. Dr. Davis also affirms that Drs. Heuberger and Haenseler initiated the meetings limited to plant pathologists from the four state universities.

As a young assistant professor from the University of Maryland, I attended my first Jersey-DelMarVa meeting with Dr. Weaver in 1968. I vividly recall the dynamic leadership and personality of Dr. Heuberger. He led some of the discussions and stimulated camaraderie during the sessions. I was gratified to be welcomed by a group of such respected colleagues.

This spring marked the 40th annual meeting of the Jersey-DelMarVa plant pathologists, who convened for a day to discuss their professional activities. Plant pathologists seem gregarious and inclined to get together with minimal organization and bureaucracy. The existence of the Jersey-DelMarVa group, with occasional representatives from surrounding states, almost implies a regional "chapter" or subdivision within the American Phytopathological Society. Perhaps other well-established regional groups have gone unnoticed all these years within our Society. If so, it would be interesting to know of their existence.

No formal recorded minutes of Jersey-DelMarVa meetings have been kept over the years, but there has been an active exchange of scientific data and information among participants. For example, Jim Kantzes of Maryland, Don Crossan of Delaware, and Bob Baldwin of Virginia have frequently traded knowledge about vegetable diseases common to the sandy soils of the DelMarVa peninsula. Such exchanges have helped shape the applied research and extension programs and control policies within this multistate area. It also is clear that over the years the group at large has influenced the concepts and ideals of many graduate students.

It would seem a shame to inadvertently overlook this active and long-lived group within our Society. It has managed to survive and flourish over four decades without annual dues, constitution, bylaws, formal elected officers, or even an executive board! Perhaps the truism illustrated here is that regardless of the circumstances, plant pathologists *will* find a meaningful way to exchange data and ideas because of ingrained professional pride, dedication, and strong desire to achieve excellence in their teaching, research, and extension programs.

This article was written when I was professor and chairperson of the Department of Plant Science at the University of Delaware, Newark. I am indebted to many Jersey-DelMarVa plant pathologists for supplying information. Especially helpful with the early history were L. O. Weaver, Thomas J. Nugent, B. H. Davis, Spencer H. Davis, Jr., John K. Springer, and H. W. Crittenden.