

Harmon Avery Runnels, 1897-1969

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Harmon A. Runnels, Professor Emeritus of Plant Pathology at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, died in Wooster, Ohio, February 19, 1969. He was born October 8, 1897, on a farm in McKean Township in Licking County, Ohio.

Calvin Runnels, Harmon's father, was a well known sweet corn and raspberry grower in Johnstown, Ohio, where Harmon attended high school. After graduation from high school, Mr. Runnels taught public school in Licking County; 2 years at Harmony and 1 year in Johnstown. During this time and while in high school, he took courses at Denison University. Later he transferred to The Ohio State University. During his sophomore year as an undergraduate at OSU, Mr. Runnels was an Assistant in the Department of Botany. He received his B.A. degree in 1923, continued his studies at OSU, and received the M.S. degree in Plant Pathology in 1925. Mr. Runnels continued graduate study for 1 year, then resigned in June to accept an appointment as Assistant in the Department of Botany at the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station, now the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, Wooster. He married Margaret Elizabeth Barr of Dayton, Ohio, September 24, 1927.

Mr. Runnels was author or co-author of 98 papers. When one reviews the titles of these papers, the wide range of his interests becomes exceedingly clear; he was frequently spoken of as "Mr. Botany" by his colleagues. His knowledge of the flora of Ohio was outstanding. One contribution, Runnels & Schafner, 1931, entitled "Manual of Ohio Weeds", has been used widely both in Ohio and adjoining states as an authority on weed identification. He also published extensively on the poisonous weeds of Ohio.

In the early years of Mr. Runnels' professional life,

he conducted extensive studies on the action of Bordeaux mixture, in association with Professor J. D. Wilson, and was instrumental in the development of the fixed coppers. Later, he cooperated with Dr. Paul E. Tilford on the control of diseases of ornamental plants including flowers, trees, and lawn grasses. He continued to work with gladiola and turf diseases until his retirement June 30, 1968, and perhaps it was in this area of work that he was happiest and made his greatest contributions. Mr. Runnels could well be described as one of the old-time broadly trained individuals, knowledgeable in several plant sciences, who could recognize a wide range of diseases and make the latest recommendations for their control. He received considerable recognition in Ohio as the "plant doctor".

Mr. Runnels had an exceedingly high sense of ethics, yet was one who combined this trait with a kind and friendly spirit. Few people have this greatly desired quality. At the time of his retirement, Harry Young, Sr., wrote of him as follows: "It was indeed a pleasure and satisfaction to have had you in the Department during our long tenure together. Your willingness and thorough cooperation made our association a very pleasant one. You carried out each obligation as it was handed to you without hesitation, which was a satisfaction to me and the State of Ohio."

Mr. Runnels was a member of The American Phytopathological Society; Sigma Xi; The American Institute of Biological Sciences; Fellow, The Ohio Academy of Science; Ohio Turfgrass Council; Ohio Pesticide Institute, Inc.; Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America; Gamma Sigma Delta; and Gamma Alpha. He was a member of the United Methodist Church of Wooster.

Professor Runnels retired June 30, 1968, with the title "Professor Emeritus". At the time of his death, he still had an active interest in plant pathology and plant identification.

Mr. Runnels is survived by his wife. One younger brother, Wendell, preceded him in death.