

Clarence John Humphrey, 1882-1970

H. N. Humphrey and M. W. Gardner



Clarence John Humphrey, a charter and life member of The American Phytopathological Society and an international authority on wood rotting fungi, died September 20, 1970, at San Bernardino, California.

Dr. Humphrey was born in Wakeman, Ohio, on March 3, 1882. He was reared on a farm and worked long hours for many years in the family's small business to be able to attend college. At age 20, he entered the University of Nebraska and graduated 4 years later with both a B.S. degree in Forestry and an A.B. degree. While there he was a student of Charles E. Bessey and F. G. Miller, a forester.

In 1906, he joined the US Forest Service and spent the ensuing year in the Office of Wood Preservation. A year later he was furloughed by the Forest Service to accept the position of Assistant Mycologist at Cornell University, where he studied under George F. Atkinson for 2 years. In 1909, he entered the Office of Forest Pathology, with headquarters at the Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wisconsin, and served there until 1925. Among his early coworkers were Ruth Fleming, P. V. Siggers, and C. Audrey Richards. During this period, specifically from 1910 to 1920, he was Consulting Pathologist in charge of the Section on Pathology. In addition, during the 12 years from 1913 to 1925, he was a Lecturer in the Plant Pathology Department at the University of Wisconsin, and offered a course in wood rotting fungi. In 1922, he received the Ph.D. degree with his major under C. E. Allen, the cytologist, and his minor under L. R. Jones. His research was on decay of building timbers due to *Poria incrassata*. During 1925-26, he was in charge of pathological investigations for the Appalachian Forest Experiment Station.

In 1926, he and his family moved to The Philippine Islands, where he was in charge of plant pathological and mycological work at the Bureau of Science in Manila. While there, he studied the decay of wood in automobiles; tested, with O. A. Reinking, the durability of Philippine hardwoods against pure cultures of decay fungi; and with Simeona Leus, revised the taxonomy of the *Ganoderma applanatus* group and some related fungi. On a leave of absence for 8 months in 1932, he studied in the mycological herbaria of Great Britain, France, Norway, Holland, and Germany.

In 1934, after 1 year's study in university herbaria on the West Coast, he was appointed Regional Pathologist with the Soil Conservation Service at Safford, Arizona. Four years later he decided to enter the business world, specializing in wood decay and termite control. During the war years, he had charge of pest

control work at Camp Hahn, California, and in 1946 he joined the California Pest Control Company as a vice-president, a position he held until his retirement in 1954 at age 72.

His research centered around the Hymenomycetes causing wood decay. With various coworkers, he developed an agar medium suitable for these fungi, determined the temperature relations of numerous species, and, in cultures, demonstrated the toxicity of numerous wood preservatives to representative species (*Fomes annosus* and *Fomes pinicola*). By comparing the loss in weight of small blocks of heartwood and sapwood of many species of conifers and broad-leaf trees incubated in large flask moist chambers with pure cultures of wood rotting fungi (*Lentinus lepideus* and *Poria incrassata*), he determined the relative durability of the wood, finding, for example, marked resistance in juniper and white cedar.

He studied decay problems in wood buildings, lumber yards, stored telephone poles, railroad ties, and pulp under field conditions, and made available to the wood-using industries information on how to prevent losses from decay. He showed that decay did not necessarily impair the use of wood for paper pulp, and that fungus deterioration of stored pulp could be prevented by preservatives. He maintained a lifelong interest in the taxonomy of these fungi.

His retirement years were devoted primarily to research in his mycological herbarium. He maintained an active relationship with the students and faculty of the California State Polytechnic College at Pomona, and in the late 1950's and the 1960's gave lectures and opened his herbarium to mycology classes. His mycological herbarium of wood destroying fungi, a collection of over 21,000 specimens containing many type specimens from all over the world, together with his scientific library is now housed at the California State Polytechnic College at Pomona and is available for student use.

Dr. Humphrey was the author or co-author of over 60 scientific papers. He served as Associate Editor of Phytopathology in 1913 and 1914. He was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Botanical Society of America, Society of American Foresters, Michigan Academy of Science, Wisconsin Academy of Science, British Mycological Society, Societe de Pathologie vegetale et d'Entomologie agricole de France and Societe Mycologique de France. In addition to his own field of endeavor, he had a consuming interest in developments in the medical world. He was a scientist of the "old school", with complete dedication to his work and an insatiable thirst for knowledge. He was a perfectionist and tended to explore thoroughly all facets of a problem.

Dr. Humphrey is survived by his widow, Blanche, a sister, Maud Hendershot, a son, Herbert N., a daughter, Marian L. Olmstead, and three granddaughters.