

## Gerald George Thorne, 1890-1975

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Gerald G. Thorne died at Methodist Hospital in Madison, Wisconsin, on February 16, 1975 at the age of 84. He was an international authority on plant parasitic nematodes, and Emeritus Professor of Plant Pathology and Zoology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Jerry, as he preferred to be called, was born in Vernal, Utah, on July 6, 1890. He obtained a B.S. degree in Entomology and Zoology from Utah State Agricultural College at Logan in 1918, and an M.S. degree in Zoology from the University of Utah at Salt Lake City in 1925.

He saw his first nematode, a sugar beet cyst nematode, in June 1917. At that time nematodes were a major problem in sugar beet production in the western states. Jerry became interested, and in 1918 he joined the Nematology Section of the Bureau of Plant Industry of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He worked in this organization until 1956. During this period of 38 years his official headquarters was the Regional U.S.D.A. Laboratory at Salt Lake City, Utah.

However, from 1930 to the end of 1932 he spent most of his time in Washington, D.C., and in 1951-1952 he served with the U.S. Economic Cooperative Administration on agricultural problems of underdeveloped countries. In 1951-1952 he traveled extensively in Indonesia, Ceylon, Thailand, and The Philippines to assess and make recommendations concerning nematode problems. In 1951, he also made a nematode survey of sugar beets in Ireland, attended the First International Congress of Nematologists at Harpenden, England, and inspected local produce markets in Lebanon. In early 1952, he visited Hawaii to consult with plant pathologists and nematologists relative to pineapple problems. In 1953, he spent 1 month at Ithaca, New York, as a lecturer and consultant to faculty and students of Cornell University. In 1954, he served in a similar capacity at the University of Nebraska. By this time Jerry Thorne had become one of the world's most knowledgeable and experienced nematologists and his services were in constant demand.

It was not surprising, therefore, when the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin needed an established nematologist to organize and direct a program of teaching and research in nematology that it turned to Jerry Thorne. He came to Wisconsin in 1956 and served on its University faculty until June 30, 1961, when he reached mandatory retirement age.

Subsequently, he served as a visiting professor and consultant in other universities and research organizations. In 1962, he visited Guatemala and spent several months investigating nematode problems in Puerto Rico, where he also worked in 1963, 1964, and 1965. From 1963 to 1968 he spent 3-8 months each year making a survey of parasitic nematodes in the Northern Great Plains States, with headquarters at Brookings, South Dakota. He served at the Cotton Research Station

at Phoenix, Arizona, during the winters of 1965-1966 and 1967-1968. He worked at the University of Florida from January 1 to April 26, 1967. In 1969, he spent 1 month as consultant and lecturer at Purdue University and 3 months at Michigan State University. In 1970, he spent 3 months at the Intermountain Range Experiment Station, U.S. Forest Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico. He also lectured and consulted for a short time at West Virginia University in 1963, and at the University of California (Riverside) in 1965. When he was 80 years old, he was invited to attend the International Congress of Nematologists at Pescara, Italy, and en route visited research centers in Belgium and The Netherlands. After the Congress he visited Egypt and Greece. Throughout his "retirement" years he kept his office and laboratory at Madison, Wisconsin, and whenever he was in town he spent much of his time in his laboratory doing research, consulting with students and staff, or writing. He was a person of extraordinary energy and dedication. He continued working until just a few weeks before his death.

Jerry Thorne was interested and knowledgeable in all aspects of nematology. He believed that nematodes rank among the most important crop pests, and that they are a constant threat to crop production in many areas. He was thoroughly familiar with the use of crop rotation, soil fumigation, resistant cultivars, natural enemies, and other methods of control. He was a firm believer in the need for accurate diagnosis of any pest before attempting to control it, and was himself an expert on nematode identification and taxonomy. While at Salt Lake City he assembled and catalogued a collection of more than 34,000 specimens representing some 2,000 species. After coming to Wisconsin, he assembled another collection of the nematodes common to the North Central States. He described the following new taxa: 1 order, 3 superfamilies, 20 families, 21 subfamilies, 70 genera, and 441 species. His taxonomic papers included approximately 2,000 original drawings. While he spent much of his time in the field, particularly during the first part of his career, he published more than 70 technical papers, including several monographs, and a textbook.

He was a member of the Society of (American) Nematologists, the Society of Tropical Nematologists, the Helminthological Society of Washington, the American Society of Sugar Beet Technologists, The American Phytopathological Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters, and Sigma Xi. He was also a 32nd-degree Mason.

Among his many honors were a Distinguished Service Award from Utah State University in 1956, a 40-year Service Award from the American Society of Sugar Beet Technologists in 1960, and a 50-year Outstanding Service to Nematology Award from the Helminthological Society of Washington in 1967. He was elected a Fellow of The American Phytopathological Society in 1965.

Jerry was also an excellent teacher. His boundless enthusiasm for his subject, his broad knowledge and experience, his ability to organize, his earthy style, and his patience made him a favorite with students. It is

unfortunate that he did not have the opportunity to do more formal teaching. The students he did train became leaders in the field of nematology. He was very proud of them, and considered them to be his greatest contribution to society.

He loved life and people, and was a most interesting and delightful person. He had a rare sense of humor and few could excel him in the telling of stories. As a boy, he herded sheep, climbed mountains, and befriended Indians. He owned many Indian relics. He loved to fish

and hunt. He was skillful with his hands and made his own bows and sometimes his arrows. He grew beautiful flowers. He was truly a man of many talents and interests. He was modest, compassionate, and generous. He was a person of integrity and high standards.

He is survived by his wife, Zelda; two sons, Marion F. of Pacific Palisades, California, and Gerald B. of Hinsdale, Illinois; and two grandchildren. A memorial service was held in Madison on February 18, 1975. Burial was in Vernal, Utah.