

James Merrill Wallace, 1902-1979

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When Professor James Merrill Wallace passed away following a heart attack on January 1, 1979, a long and distinguished career in the field of virus pathology of citrus and avocado came to a close. Professor Wallace was born in Ripley, Mississippi, on October 13, 1902. He completed undergraduate studies and received a BS in agriculture at Mississippi State University in 1923 and received the MS and PhD degrees in plant pathology at the University of Minnesota in 1927 and 1929, respectively.

Before joining the Department of Plant Pathology of the University of California Citrus Experiment Station at Riverside in 1942, Merrill, as he was known by many of his friends, already had established a reputation as a plant virus research pathologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture at Twin Falls, Idaho, and Riverside, California. From 1929 until 1942, as a plant pathologist with the Office of Sugar Plants of the USDA, he made many noteworthy investigations of the very serious virus disease of sugar beets and tomato known as curly-top. His work on passive immunization of tomato against severe effects of this disease is a classic of plant virus pathology.

After joining the University of California Experiment Station staff in 1942, Merrill initiated research on virus diseases of citrus and avocado. He soon made significant contributions including the demonstration, jointly with Dr. H. S. Fawcett, that quick decline, or tristeza disease, of citrus is caused by a virus. He also developed short-term indexing techniques for psorosis and tristeza viruses in citrus and determined the viral etiology of tatter leaf, citrange stunt, citrus ringspot, and vein enation disease, and showed the latter to be caused by the same virus that causes citrus woody-gall disease.

Dr. Wallace cooperated extensively with federal and state departments of agriculture. He planned and conducted, from 1954 to 1959, a thorough indexing program for foreign citrus plants held by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This program later merged with the University's Citrus Clonal Protection Program, which he helped plan and direct and to which he freely contributed his expertise on the detection of citrus viruses.

In 1957, he chaired the committee which organized an international conference on citrus virus diseases as part of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Citrus Experiment Station of the University of California at Riverside. He edited the conference proceedings, which then were published by the University. Encouraged by the success of this international meeting, he planned and founded the International Organization of Citrus Virologists which became a working group of citrus research

people in 41 countries. Merrill was its first chairman, and the organization continues to function and has held conferences every 3 yr in citrus-growing countries throughout the world.

Dr. Wallace discovered and characterized the unusual seed transmission of the causal agent of avocado sunblotch disease in symptomless carriers. He contributed extensively to the literature on citrus and avocado viruses; his last, and most comprehensive, contribution is the chapter on citrus virus and viruslike diseases in Vol. IV of the "Citrus Industry," published in 1978 by the University, which will be a basic reference for years to come.

When the graduate program in plant pathology was established at the Riverside campus in 1960, Merrill became an enthusiastic teacher of a very popular course on plant virus diseases which drew students from all parts of the world. He was appointed Professor of Plant Pathology in 1964.

Because of his international reputation in research on virus diseases of citrus and his renown as a teacher, he was sought as a consultant by many governments of foreign countries with serious citrus virus problems. He visited many of these countries and worked hard to help them, especially with citrus virus detection and programs for the prevention of graft-transmissible diseases. He was a consultant for the Agricultural Operations of the Rockefeller Foundation and served on several U.S. AID assignments.

He was an active member of the American Phytopathological Society, served as president of its Pacific Division in 1966, and as a society delegate to International Botanical Congresses in Paris in 1954 and in Montreal in 1959. He was elected a Fellow of the American Phytopathological Society in 1970, the same year he retired to emeritus professor status in the University.

Merrill Wallace was active in the social and community life of Riverside. He was especially active in the Kiwanis Club, and served as president in 1948. Merrill also had considerable talent for writing humorous poetry and skits which he often composed for special holidays, for retirement parties, and as part of the entertainment for various conference dinners. His colleagues often referred to him as the resident poet laureate.

Professor Wallace is survived by his wife, Adeline Hoiem Wallace, whom he married June 13, 1929. Had he lived 6 months longer, they would have celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. He also is survived by his daughter Jane, and granddaughter, Katherine.

Many men in this world are endowed with great knowledge, as was Merrill Wallace. He added to this endowment the priceless ingredient of wisdom, which he exercised with wit and perception. The memory of James Merrill Wallace remains vivid and honored among us, and the strength of his values and ideals has influenced us all. He will be greatly missed not only by colleagues on the Riverside campus, but by many friends throughout the world.