

J. Ralph Shay, 1918–1980

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Dr. J. Ralph Shay, Assistant Dean of Research and Professor of Plant Pathology at Oregon State University, died March 27, 1980, at Corvallis, Oregon. He had been in ill health for about three years but was active in University affairs until a few weeks before his death.

He was born on January 8, 1918, at Bird City, Kansas, and attended public schools there. He received a BS degree in Agriculture from the University of Arkansas in 1939. From 1939 to 1943, he was a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin at Madison where, under the direction of H. W. Keitt, he conducted definitive research on the genetics of *Venturia inaequalis*, causal agent of the apple scab disease. He received a MS degree in Plant Pathology in 1941 and a PhD in 1943 from the University of Wisconsin.

Dr. Shay's first academic position was as Assistant Professor of Plant Pathology at the University of Arkansas from 1943 to 1945, where he served as a vegetable pathologist. In March 1945, he accepted a position as Assistant Professor in the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology at Purdue University. His area of research was fruit pathology. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1948 and to Professor and Assistant Department Head in 1951. In 1954, he became Department Head and served in that position until September 1966. At that time, he assumed the position of Chairman in the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology at Oregon State University. In 1974, he was promoted to Assistant Dean of Research, a position he held until his death.

In 1945, upon arriving at Purdue, Dr. Shay was instrumental in establishing the cooperative program between Purdue and the University of Illinois for the development of scab-immune apple cultivars. This program was expanded in 1950 to include Rutgers University. Following the successful initiation of this program, the methods and procedures developed by Dr. Shay and his co-workers were adopted at other apple breeding centers, (notably at Geneva, NY; Ottawa and St. Jean, Canada; Kentville, Nova Scotia; and in England and France) which became involved in developing new disease-resistant apple cultivars. He was a co-recipient of the Joseph H. Gurley Award in 1953 for publication on apple scab resistance in *Malus*.

While at Purdue, Dr. Shay became interested in tree fruit viruses and was actively involved in an inter-regional research project dealing with this problem. He became known throughout North and South America and Europe for his research in this area and collaborated in elucidating several types of apple viruses. From 1960 to 1966, he served as chairman of a committee on multi-spectral sensing in Agriculture sponsored by the National Academy of Science-National Research Council. While serving on this committee, he helped NASA and USDA establish interdisciplinary research programs involving orbiting satellites in engineering and agriculture at four institutions. He was an internationally recognized authority on remote sensing, edited a landmark NAS-NRC publication on the subject, and received the Remote Sensing Award from the American Photogrammetry Society in 1970.

While Head of the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology at Purdue, Dr. Shay coordinated construction of new research facilities, stimulated and strengthened graduate programs, and facilitated increased outside grant support for research. At Oregon State University he strengthened programs in extension plant pathology and plant physiology and was instrumental in organizing an interdepartmental undergraduate curriculum in pest management. Working closely with the nursery crops industries in the Pacific Northwest, Dr. Shay spearheaded the construction, funding, and staffing of a new USDA/ARS Ornamental Plant Research Laboratory at Corvallis.

Dr. Shay was active in the affairs for the American Phytopathological Society, serving as Councilor-at-Large from 1959 to 1962, as Secretary from 1963 to 1966, and was chairman of the plant disease losses committee for several years. He served as Secretary-Treasurer of the North Central Division from 1951 to 1954 and as Councilor of that division from 1954 to 1956. He was a member of the Alpha Gamma Rho, Gamma Alpha, Sigma Xi, the Botanical Society, and American Society of Horticultural Science and authored and co-authored many scientific papers and publications.

He was a man of vision, very enthusiastic about his work and about science in general. He had the ability to stimulate enthusiasm in others. He had an outgoing personality and made friends easily. He will be missed by his many friends and associates.

He is survived by his wife Jean, whom he married in 1943, five daughters (Margaret, Linda, Elizabeth, Susan, and Jennifer) and one son (Michael).