

Charles Stewart Holton, 1904–1980

George W. Fischer



Charles Stewart Holton was born in Amite, Louisiana, December 8, 1904. He died suddenly of a heart attack at his home in Sun City, Arizona, October 19, 1980.

Following graduation from Chesbrough Agricultural High School, Chesbrough, Louisiana, he attended Louisiana State University and received the B.S. degree in 1927 with a major in plant pathology. His graduate work in plant pathology at the University of Minnesota where he concurrently held an instructorship while earning the M.S.

degree in 1929 and the Ph.D. in 1932.

Soon after receiving the doctorate in 1932, he was appointed assistant plant pathologist in the USDA Division of Cereal Crops and Diseases, Bureau of Plant Industry, and was stationed with the Department of Plant Pathology, State College of Washington at Pullman. With this appointment he began a long and illustrious career with the United States Department of Agriculture, working on problems pertaining to the biology and control of the cereal smuts, primarily those of wheat and oats. His scientific contributions reflected the magnitude of the overall smut problem and culminated in 1953 when he established the Pacific Northwest Regional Smut Research Laboratory at Pullman, Washington, in cooperation with the Department of Plant Pathology at Washington State University. Typically humorous, Dr. Holton remarked at the time that he had finally built his job up to the point where he needed help to perform the duties! L. H. Purdy and E. L. Kendrick were appointed to the laboratory with Dr. Holton as supervisor. This team proved eminently effective in solving the then serious cereal smut problems, especially those of common bunt of wheat and soil contamination with smut spores. These contributions, together with the remarkable new wheat cultivars developed by their agronomist colleague, O. A. Vogel, eventually brought the long-standing wheat smut problem under control. As the seriousness of the smut diseases waned, some of the rusts of cereals, especially stripe rust, assumed new importance. This led to the reorganization of the old Regional Smut Research Laboratory into the Pacific Northwest Regional Cereal Disease Research Laboratory. Of course, Dr. Holton figured prominently in this reorganization and continued as supervisor. In 1960, Dr. Holton and the Regional Smut Research Laboratory received the United States Department of Agriculture Award for Superior Service.

Cooperation with the Department of Plant Pathology at Washington State University was intimate and real, he functioned as a *bona fide* member of the department, guided many graduate students, attended department meetings, conducted seminars, and coauthored many scientific papers and books with faculty members, and was made an honorary professor in the department. That several of his students and associates later attained status as

scientists in their own right and also became officers in the American Phytopathological Society, reflects the effectiveness of his leadership. His status on the campus was duly recognized in 1968 when he was presented one of the prestigious University-wide *Invited Addresses* titled "Man's Unworthy Competitors for World Food Resources," which dealt with the role of plant pathology in safeguarding a continuing world food supply.

Dr. Holton was an effective and faithful servant of the American Phytopathological Society. He served as Associate Editor of *Phytopathology*, 1949–1951, and as Editor-in-Chief, 1952–1954. He also served as Editor-in-Chief of the Society's Golden Jubilee Volume (1958), *Plant Pathology, Problems and Progress*. In 1958, Dr. Holton was elected President, Pacific Division, of the APS, and in 1959–1960 he served as Councilor-at-Large and successively became Vice-President in 1961, President-Elect in 1962, and President in 1963. In 1965, he became a Fellow in the Society.

In 1971, he received the E. C. Stakman Award from the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Holton authored or coauthored more than 100 scientific and technical publications, including two books: *Bunt or Stinking Smut of Wheat* (with F. D. Heald) and *Biology and Control of the Smut Fungi* (with G. W. Fischer). He was a member of several honorary and scientific and social societies; these included Sigma Xi, Alpha Zeta, Phi Kappa Phi, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the social fraternity, Alpha Gamma Rho.

In his later years, Dr. Holton's fame as a leader and research worker led to several opportunities for foreign service. In 1960 he received a Fulbright Research Award to Italy and was attached to the University of Pavia. In 1961, he received a Rockefeller Foundation travel grant for two months to visit agricultural research institutions in Western Europe. In 1966, he was again on leave from the USDA for four months to work with B. L. Renfro at New Delhi, India, as Field Staff Consultant on plant disease with the Rockefeller Foundation Program in Agriculture. Following retirement from the USDA in April 1968, he served for two years with the Ford Foundation as Project Specialist Adviser in Plant Pathology, University of Agricultural Sciences, in Bangalore, India. This was followed by another two-year stint as Director, Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, under the sponsorship of the University of Wisconsin-AID Program. Then he decided to settle down to real retirement in Sun City, Arizona.

In 1934, Dr. Holton married Helen Treptow. They had three children; Dr. James R. Holton, professor of atmospheric sciences, University of Washington; and daughters Janet (Mrs. K. M. Klug) and Shirley (Mrs. William Koral). He is survived by his wife and three children.

The passing of Dr. Holton leaves a feeling of great personal loss in the hearts of his numerous friends and colleagues. It has been a rewarding privilege for all of us who have known and been associated with this man.