

Rubert Burley Streets, Sr., 1895–1981

R. M. Allen



Rubert B. Streets, Sr., Emeritus Professor of Plant Pathology at the University of Arizona, Tucson, died of a heart attack in Redwood City, California, May 29, 1981.

Doc, as he was called with affection and respect by all who knew him, was born May 22, 1895, in Helena, Montana, and attended local schools there until 1913. During these precollege years he developed an intense and life-long interest in all of nature's living things. At Montana State College, now Montana State

University, at Bozeman, he received a B.S. degree in botany and bacteriology in 1918. Immediately upon graduation he served (July, 1918–February, 1919) with the United States Army in the 87th Infantry, 19th Division, and in this short time earned the grade of Sergeant. Upon discharge, his first professional job was with the Office of Cereal Investigations and in 1919–1920 he was the agent in charge of barberry eradication in Montana. In 1920, he entered the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he received the M.S. degree in 1922 with a major in plant pathology and a minor in botany. From 1922 to 1924 he was a half-time instructor in the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin and in 1924, after working with G. W. Keitt, was awarded the Ph.D. degree with a major in plant pathology and a minor in entomology.

In September, 1924, Doc moved to the University of Arizona, Tucson, as assistant professor and second faculty member of the Department of Plant Pathology. He progressed through the several academic ranks, succeeded J. G. Brown as department head in 1952, and served in that capacity until 1960. He remained an active, full-time faculty member until June, 1965. From this date until June, 1978, he participated in departmental activities on a part-time stipend while devoting nearly full time to writing three books and a monograph.

Doc Streets' research interests and contributions were diverse and, above all, they were practical. Angular leaf spot of cotton has virtually been eliminated from Arizona by the use of acid-delinted seed processed through machinery he helped design and patent. The process and machinery have changed little in 50 years and all cottonseed planted in Arizona today are acid-delinted. He pioneered research on *Phymatotrichum* root rot of woody perennial plants with studies of this disease on pecans. This work led to the development of currently effective control measures for *Phymatotrichum* root rot on trees and ornamental plants by applications of near-phytotoxic quantities of inexpensive fertilizers. His research on this disease affecting field crops resulted in other controls involving timely applications of green manures and chemical nutrients. These measures enabled farmers to grow susceptible but profitable crops nearly continuously on infested land. Other research interests included *Fusarium* wilt of flax, brown rot of stone fruits, heart rot of date palm, culture and diseases of guar, antibiotic control of fire blight, and all facets of rose culture in the southwestern United States.

He was the author or coauthor of 11 detailed, monograph-type bulletins, technical bulletins, and extension circulars concerning *Phymatotrichum* root rot, roses, date palms, diseases of field crops, weed and mesquite control, grape diseases, and diseases of guar. In addition, he wrote numerous shorter technical reports and literally hundreds of popular articles giving timely hints for home gardening. He authored two books in 1969, "Plant Diseases of the Southwest," and "The Diagnosis of Plant Diseases." In 1973, with H. E. Bloss, he completed *Phytopathological Monograph No. 8*, titled "Phymatotrichum Root Rot," for the American Phytopathological Society. Another book, "Gardening in the Sun," a simple and dependable guide to arid-climate gardening, was published in 1975.

Doc Streets' contributions to phytopathological research were significant. However, his preferred role for 54 years was as unofficial extension specialist in plant pathology and disease diagnostician extraordinary. He was a highly respected teacher of courses in plant pathology on diseases of fruits and nuts, ornamentals, vegetables, citrus, and field crops and on mycology and disease diagnosis. He shared his extensive knowledge of plant taxonomy, entomology, and ornithology with those of us fortunate enough to have been his students. A field trip with Doc was an enlightening experience.

Generous with his time and talents in serving many organizations, he was a member of the American Phytopathological Society and served the Pacific Division as vice-president in 1944 and as president in 1945, and was president of the Arizona Association of Nurserymen in 1962. He served as Councilor on Nature Studies and Conservation and as a member of the Executive Committee, Catalina Council, Boy Scouts of America. He was an Accredited National Instructor in Horticulture for the five judges-training courses of the National Council of Women's Garden Clubs and served as a judge at flower shows and horticultural exhibits for garden clubs, rose shows, and county and state fairs for nearly 50 years. He was a member and consulting Rosarian for the Southwest district and organizer of the Tucson chapter of the American Rose Society. He assumed much of the responsibility for the establishment of Tucson's rose test garden of several thousand plants and each year personally set out new plants for testing and for the enjoyment of thousands of visitors viewing the garden annually. He advised in the development of the Demonstration Desert Garden for the renowned Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, where his knowledge of indigenous plants was of great value. He was instrumental in the introduction of certain oriental trees and shrubs to Arizona and used many in plantings on the campus of the University of Arizona, for which he served many years as a landscaping advisor. He was a member of the Men's Garden Club of America and an organizer of the Men's Garden Club of Tucson for which he prepared a monthly column called "Garden Reminders" for over 10 years. He was a member of Sigma Xi and Phi Kappa Phi, serving in all chairs of both, and a member of Gamma Sigma Delta and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

In recognition of his many contributions, Doc Streets received the Silver Beaver award, the highest adult award of the Boy Scouts of America (1948), the Medallion of Merit from the University of Arizona (1960), the Bronze Medal of the Men's Garden Clubs of America (1962), a special plaque from the Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs in recognition of his many lectures and judging assignments (1962), the Citation for Outstanding Service to Horticulture by the American Society for Horticultural Science (1965), the Faculty Recognition Award by the Tucson Trade Bureau (1966), and the Johnny Appleseed Award by the Men's Garden Clubs of America (1967).

He is survived by his wife, Frances Wocasek Streets, formerly of Great Falls, Montana, whom he married in 1922; two sons, R. B. Streets, Jr., Professor of Electrical Engineering, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and Paul D. Streets, Landscaping Consultant, Tucson, Arizona; and a daughter, Catherine Anne Delfs, of Redwood City, California; and four grandchildren.

Dr. Streets was honest, practical, sensitive, and kind. Almost every morning on his way to work, he found time to cut a select rose or other seasonal bloom with which to greet one of the secretaries a cheery "Good Morning." However, in the 33 years I knew him, I never heard him say "Good-bye." These words, for him, were too final because he expected to be around a long time. He was—and he will be—in the memories of his family, colleagues, former students, and a multitude of friends. I am certain he would have preferred the less final departing salutations of his beloved Southwest—"Hasta la vista" or "Vaya con Dios!" So be it.