

Antonio Graniti



On May 13, 1982, Professor Antonio Ciccarone of the University of Bari, Italy, passed away at the age of 73. He had not enjoyed good health in the last years, but his sudden death came unexpectedly, while he was still actively engaged in his studies and leading his research group.

Professor Ciccarone was born in 1909 in a small town (Vasto) on the middle Adriatic coast of Italy. He was a member of a family with old cultural and civic traditions. After earning a degree in Agricultural Sciences at the

University of Bologna in 1933, he studied mycology and plant pathology with Professor L. Montemartini at the Botanical Institute of the University of Palermo, Sicily (1935–1937). He was appointed Plant Pathologist at the Agricultural Experiment Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1938. Here he started and developed the Plant Pathology Section and organized the first East African Plant Protection Service. In 1940, his scientific activity in East Africa was interrupted by the war. He served in the Italian army until he was taken prisoner in 1941. His prison term kept him in Kenya for three years. In 1944, after the Italian armistice, he joined the Botanical Section of the Scott Agricultural Laboratories, Department of Agriculture, Nairobi, Kenya, and worked with Dr. R. M. Nattrass on cypress canker and several new plant diseases. Repatriated in 1946, he spent a year at the Institute for Overseas Agriculture, Florence, where he elaborated what he had been able to save of his work in East Africa.

In 1947, following an invitation from the local government, he moved to the Agricultural Research Centre, Maracay, Venezuela, where he spent a year cooperating with Dr. C. M. Meredith during the organization of the Mycology Section and the local service for plant disease survey. He also taught plant pathology at the Central University of Venezuela.

In 1948, Professor Ciccarone was appointed Deputy Director of the Plant Pathology Experiment Station at Rome where he spent five years in tireless research work and also taught plant pathology, first at the University of Rome and then at Sassari in Sardinia. At the end of 1952, he became full Professor of Plant Pathology and was assigned to the University of Catania in Sicily, where he established and chaired a new Plant Pathology Institute. In 1957, he moved to the University of Bari, where he spent the rest of his life. In Bari, Professor Ciccarone once again initiated and developed a new Institute of Plant Pathology and served for many years as Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture. His activities as Chairman of the Institute and research leader were outstandingly successful. Under his leadership, Bari has become one of the main centers for plant pathology in the Mediterranean area. In 25 years, under his guidance, the Bari Institute expanded into a leading, modernly equipped organization with a staff of 80 workers including 25 professionals. Ten of his former associates have become full professors of plant pathology or related subjects.

Professor Ciccarone was a very active research manager both in Italy and abroad. For two terms (1964–1972) he was a member of the Committee for Agricultural Sciences of the National Research Council, Rome, and served as President during the second term. In 1973, he founded the Italian Phytopathological Society (Associazione Fitopatologica Italiana). He had many opportunities to contribute effectively to international organizations devoted to plant health and protection, such as FAO and EPPO. He spent study leaves in several European countries, USA, and Brazil and visited many other countries, including the USSR and China.

He was a strong proponent for the development and coordination of plant pathology and, on a wider range, of other agricultural disciplines in the Mediterranean region. In 1960, jointly with Professor G. Goidanich, he founded the international

journal *Phytopathologia Mediterranea* and (in 1964) the regional “Mediterranean Phytopathological Union” with the aim of promoting plant pathology research and stimulating cooperation among countries in the Mediterranean area.

Professor Ciccarone was a member of many scientific societies and academies, including The American Mycological Society and The American Phytopathological Society (since 1946). He was elected a Fellow of the APS in 1976.

In his own research, Professor Ciccarone was primarily a mycologist. He newly described or revised the systematic position of several genera and about 40 species or subspecific taxa of parasitic fungi. He described a large number of fungal diseases previously unreported in the countries where he found them. Because he had a general interest in diseases of plants and was involved in solving related problems in areas with different climatic conditions, he became involved in various branches of plant pathology, ranging from the noninfectious to bacterial and viral diseases, including their control. He also studied some diseases caused by other classes of noxious plant pests including nematodes, mites, and parasitic phanerogams. General aspects of plant pathology, such as host-parasite interactions and resistance of plants to diseases were treated as well. He published about 180 papers covering systematics, biology, ecology, and epidemiology of plant pathogenic fungi, effect of climate on vegetation and parasites, reviews and studies on problems of plant disease control, and reports of new plant diseases identified in many countries.

More than the vastness and diversity of this scientific production, to which one could add over one thousand papers published by his students and associates under his leadership, what is astonishing is Professor Ciccarone’s approach to research and his ability to make a significant scientific contribution, even from an apparently minor phytopathological problem. His education was, in fact, deep and eclectic, ranging from a classic, humanities background to a wide knowledge of the more advanced fields of applied botany, mycology, and plant pathology. He was a thinker endowed with great talent and deep interests in different fields of culture. His acute and quick intelligence and his synthetic reasoning ability enabled him to move from the particular to the general, discovering new horizons in research and drawing conclusions that were useful not only to students, but also to the growers and countrymen. His observations, research findings, intuition, and realistic views of local problems deeply affected practical applications, often contrasting sharply with then-current recommendations based on uncertain data or data acquired in ecologically different areas.

Professor Ciccarone oriented his whole life around an idealistic, missionary devotion to science and the encouragement of young scientists. To reach these goals he often sacrificed all personal interests. His activities in the field of plant pathology, and more generally of agriculture, were carried out in the poorest and the least developed areas of the Mediterranean region, East Africa, and South America. He has certainly earned the reputation of being one of the most eminent and well-rounded plant pathologists in Europe.

Professor Ciccarone had a magnetic personality, great knowledge and wisdom, and was gifted with clarity of thought and expression, even in other languages. Talking with him was always a treat and an enrichment. Although strict and exacting toward work and duties, he was generous with assistance, advice, and encouragement to his students and the young staff members. By giving of himself in service to others he served as an example for others to follow. As a man of science and faith, the strength of his idealism, enthusiasm, courage, and morals helped all who worked with him to follow the pathways that he initiated with rare foresight and determination.

Professor Ciccarone will be long remembered and honored as an extraordinary human being and as a scientist who dedicated his life to others.