

## Truman C. Ryker, 1908–1986

J. C. Walker and Charles J. Delp



Truman C. Ryker, retired product development manager for seed and soil fungicides of the E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company died of cancer on January 25, 1986, in Wilmington, DE. "T.C.," as he was known to his colleagues and friends, was born in Hutchinson, Kansas, on May 4, 1908, and grew up on a farm in Mississippi. While attending Mississippi State College, he was an ROTC company commander and a member of the varsity track team. He studied agriculture and specialized in horti-

culture and entomology for a B.S. degree in 1929. In graduate school at Louisiana State University, "T.C." worked with Professor J. M. Beal. Results of their research are published in part as Louisiana Bulletin 223 entitled "Studies on Sugar Cane Roots." He was elected to Phi Kappa Phi honor society and received the M.S. in 1931. Continuing graduate work at the University of Wisconsin was under the direction of Professor J. C. Walker on breeding work with cabbage. His research problem, which led to a Ph.D. degree in plant pathology in 1934, was a study of fusarium yellows of celery and is published in *PHYTOPATHOLOGY* 25:578-600.

Dr. Ryker's first professional job was with the Wisconsin Cabbage Seed Company of Racine, WI, as fieldman for the breeding and seed production of yellows resistant cabbage. In 1936, he accepted the position of assistant pathologist with the Louisiana Agriculture Experiment Station, and worked six years on rice diseases at the university in the Botany and Plant Pathology Department. A considerable part of his work was devoted to the development of *Cercospora* resistance in rice, a

problem complicated by the number of distinct pathogenic strains of *Cercospora oryzae*. The breeding work was in association with Nelson E. Jodon, of the USDA Rice Experiment Station, Crowley, LA.

In 1942 his research was interrupted by the Army. Captain Ryker served as assistant professor of military science and tactics at Geroga Tech. He retired a major.

"T.C." started work with Du Pont in 1947 as a field biologist in Baton Rouge. He went to Wilmington in 1950 as a development and technical service representative. From 1964 until his retirement in 1973, he was product development manager with responsibilities for seed and turf fungicides and the development of new crop fungicides. His energy and enthusiasm in the conduct of meetings, his unquestioned expertise in the field of plant pathology, and his devotion to the protection of crops and horticultural plants made him a valued friend and associate of plant scientists throughout the United States. He served as an effective liaison between industry and most of the agricultural research centers, and was a valued Du Pont employee. "T.C." had a rare gift of knowledge, wit, and boyish energy.

After his retirement he continued as an authority and generally an ambassador of good will in the development of "Benlate" benomyl fungicide as an aid in the control of Dutch elm disease. He was an active volunteer for the YMCA and conservation groups. Among his memberships were the International Society of Arboriculture, the Nature Conservancy, the American Elm Institute, and the American Horticultural Society.

He is survived by a daughter, Jean Major, three sons, William T. Ryker, Peter J. Ryker, and John A. Ryker, two granddaughters, and a brother, D. W. Ryker. "T.C." was a friendly man with a twinkle in his eyes. His family and colleagues will miss him.