

Harold Homer Foster, 1902–1986

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Harold Homer Foster, plant pathologist emeritus, Clemson University, died at Anderson Memorial Hospital, Anderson, SC, on 19 October 1986.

Dr. Foster, son of Allen and Lucy Foster, was born 24 March 1902, on a farm near Arlington in northeastern Iowa. He received his early education in the elementary school at Arlington and at Upper Iowa Academy at Fayette, Iowa. He received the A.B. degree at Upper Iowa (Methodist) College at Fayette in 1927, and the

A.M. degree at The University of Nebraska in 1930. While at Nebraska, he worked during the summer with the barberry eradication program. This work was largely responsible for familiarizing him with, and developing in him an interest in, plant diseases and their control. He received the Ph.D. degree in Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin in 1935, working under the supervision of Dr. George W. Keitt.

After receiving his doctorate, Dr. Foster worked from 1935 to 1940 as a junior plant pathologist with the USDA Tobacco Investigations Program at Arlington, Virginia. Dr. E. E. Clayton supervised his work there on resistance of tobacco to black shank, blue mold, and mosaic. From 1940 until 1943 he served as plant pathologist and geneticist at the Tobacco Institute at Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico. In 1943 he returned to the continental United States as acting superintendent and plant pathologist at the Truck Crops Experiment Station at Crystal Springs, Mississippi. At the end of World War II, when the station superintendent returned from military service, Dr. Foster was transferred to Mississippi State University where he continued his work with vegetables. In 1947 he moved to Clemson College, Clemson, South Carolina, where he initiated a research program on fruit disease control, with major emphasis on peaches. He retired in 1967 and continued to live at Clemson.

Dr. Foster's early work was with the diseases of tobacco, especially black shank, blue mold, and mosaic. He and Dr. Clayton screened numerous tobacco lines, including *Nicotiana tabacum* and other *Nicotiana* spp., for resistance to these diseases. Dr. Foster was interested in cultural and chemical means for controlling tobacco diseases as well as in the development of

disease-resistant cultivars. His return to the continental United States in 1943 coincided with the appearance of the first organic fungicides on the market. He devoted the remainder of his professional career in Mississippi and South Carolina to testing and promoting the use of these new products. In Mississippi he was concerned chiefly with fungicidal control of vegetable diseases, especially downy mildew in fall cabbage seedbeds. At Clemson he studied the control of root knot, brown rot, scab, and *Rhizopus* rot on peaches, and disease control on apples, pecans, grapes, and fall cantaloupes. During his first ten years in South Carolina, the extension plant pathology staff consisted of only one man who was also responsible for the program in Extension Entomology. Therefore, Dr. Foster devoted much time to farm visits, grower production meetings, and other duties normally considered the responsibility of the Extension Service. As his research progressed, he promoted the use of the new products and demonstrated how they should be used. He located his experimental plots at strategic spots over South Carolina so that growers could easily see the plots throughout the season.

Dr. Foster taught introductory or advanced plant pathology courses at various times. While he enjoyed teaching, especially contact with students, he was aware that his first concern must be his orchard research. He did most of the spraying, harvesting, and collection of data with the assistance of a technician.

He was active throughout his life in community affairs. As a member of the United Methodist Church he held several leadership positions in his local congregation. He was an adult leader with Boy Scouts and a member of Lions International.

Dr. Foster was an avid gardener and was eager to try new varieties of vegetables and flowers. It was a pleasure to him to share with neighbors the bounties of his garden and a deep frustration to him when failing health restricted his outdoor activities. He was also a bird watcher and was familiar with many of the land birds of the southern and midwestern United States.

Dr. Foster was a member of American Phytopathological Society, Society of Nematology, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Sigma Xi, and Phi Sigma.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Lois Gasset Foster, of Clemson; one son, Rev. Rodney Allen Foster, of Mullens, West Virginia; three grandchildren; and one great grandchild. Harold and Lois celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary a few months before his death.