

Fred Harrison Smith, 1926–1987

Wesley Witcher and L. W. Baxter, Jr.

Fred Harrison Smith, professor of plant pathology and extension plant pathologist emeritus, Cooperative Extension Service, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina, drowned while fishing at Vicksburg, Mississippi, on 15 October 1987.

Fred was born at Between, Georgia, in Walton County, 16 January 1926, on a general farm. He received his early education in the Walton County public school system. He completed his public education at Monroe High School.

During World War II he entered the U. S. Army in 1944 and, after training, served in Germany. He was honorably discharged in 1946.

He entered the University of Georgia in 1948 and received a B.S. degree in plant pathology in 1951. He remained at the University of Georgia and earned the M.S. degree in plant pathology, conferred in 1952. On 7 February 1953 he married Eleanor Harris, a native of Athens, Georgia.

Fred's first position was that of Farmer's Home Administration loan officer from 1952 until 1954. He then took a position with the Orkin Exterminating Company. He continued to work with Orkin until 1957, when he accepted a position with the Department of Botany and Bacteriology at Clemson College. At that time plant pathology was a part of that department. Two persons were serving at that time in the dual roles as extension entomologist and plant pathologist, so that Fred was the first full-time extension plant pathologist in the state. From 1957 until 1969 Fred conducted an ambitious program as extension plant pathologist. His primary emphasis was on field crops, especially soybeans, and vegetables.

In the late 1960s he was able to take several graduate courses at Clemson while still conducting a full-time extension program. In 1966 he returned to the University of Georgia as a full-time student. He continued to return to Clemson on weekends to keep his program active. The PhD degree was conferred on Fred in 1970 by the University of Georgia. His dissertation research was with the Columbia nematode, *Hoplolaimus columbus*.

In 1973, Dr. Smith was promoted to professor and extension



program leader in the Department of Plant Pathology and Physiology, Clemson University, with a small percentage of his time devoted to research and at least 80% extension responsibilities. His research during this period was concerned primarily with control of nematodes on field crops by cultural and chemical means. In 1979 he returned to 100% Cooperative Extension but continued to conduct some well-conceived field research.

When he started working with the Extension Service, Fred saw a need for an organization to deal with diagnosis of plant problems that confront farmers and homeowners almost continuously. He studied programs at other locations and decided on his own unique approach to this situation. With the help of William P. Yates, a graduate assistant, he established the Plant Problem Clinic, starting with specimens sent directly to his office and handled there along with his other work. The clinic grew through several stages, and it is now an independently housed, efficient operation.

One goal he pursued throughout his career was alerting other workers and growers to the role of nematodes in plant problems in South Carolina. He earned the respect of extension personnel and farmers throughout the state because of his willingness to visit them and to help them with their problems through logical and practical answers.

Dr. Smith served on numerous committees in extension in the Southeast and on the Clemson University campus. From 1969 until 1983, he received more than 40 grants from various chemical companies for financial aid in applied research. He published numerous extension articles.

In 1981 he was awarded the Extension Outstanding Performance Award, and in 1983 he was proclaimed Man of the Year by the Soybean Growers Association.

He enjoyed nature's beauty whether in pine forests or on the willow-bordered lakes. As he traveled the roads of South Carolina he was always alert to needs he could address. All who knew him knew that he was available for sound, common-sense advice concerning plant problems.

He was a faithful member of the Clemson United Methodist Church and of the Clemson Lions Club. He was a friend of many people.

He is survived by his wife, Eleanor, his four daughters—Kathryn Overstreet, Patricia Duelfer, Rebecca Smith, and Deborah Fowler—and five grandchildren.