

Vincent W. Cochrane, 1916–1987

Carl W. Boothroyd and Leon J. Tyler



Vincent W. Cochrane passed away in Geneva, New York on January 16, 1987 after a brief illness. He was born in Plainfield, New Jersey in 1916 and spent most of his childhood years in Brooklyn, New York. He left the city to attend Quaker Preparatory Schools, first in Westtown, and then in Oakwood. He graduated during the Depression years, and went to work for some time in an upstate New York agricultural region. Stimulus from this environment, and a desire to continue his education, prompted a

request for admission to the College of Agriculture at Cornell University. He was accepted in 1935 and thus began an illustrious career as a scientist and an educator.

At Cornell, Vincent was admitted to the Telluride Association, an organization founded to house gifted students together and to encourage them to develop a broad, liberal education. Upon graduation with the B.S. degree in 1939, he decided to specialize in plant pathology, and enrolled in Cornell's graduate school under the supervision of L. M. Massey and A. W. Dimock. His research dissertation, on the common leaf rust of rose caused by *Phragmidium mucronatum* (Fr.) Schlecht, was an intensive investigation that was subsequently published as a Cornell Memoir. This accomplishment had much to do with his later interest in the area of fungal metabolism and physiology. In 1944, he received the Ph.D. degree and began his professional career as a microbiologist, working on a wartime penicillin project. The following year he married Jean Conn, a microbiologist, whom he had met at Cornell. They collaborated in both research and teaching. In 1945, Vincent joined the staff of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven, Connecticut. In 1947, he began work at Wesleyan University, in Middletown, Connecticut, where he remained until retirement in 1982. At Wesleyan, Dr. Cochrane established an excellent reputation in both teaching and research. He was appointed the Daniel B. Ayres Professor of Biology, and in 1958 authored a widely acclaimed

textbook, *The Physiology of the Fungi*, published by Wiley and Sons.

In an article prepared for the journal *Mycologia*, Bruce Cochrane, Vincent's son, gives us an insight into the diverse qualities that made this man, his father, a great scientist and educator. Bruce tells how Vincent loved biology and the natural environment. He specialized in the physiology and biochemistry of one group of organisms, the fungi, and yet he emphasized repeatedly that scientific information obtained for this group contributed to a broader understanding of universal biological processes. He did not deny the need for specialization within biology; in fact, he championed the idea that investigations of new technologies were paramount and should be routinely built into a university's curriculum. However, he openly regretted the fact that many scientists tended to become too specialized. There was increasingly broad separation within field of biology, and even more so within departments of the university. He was concerned that scientists did not take advantage of the many opportunities for a liberal education.

At Wesleyan, Vincent practiced what he preached. In his early years there, he participated in the teaching of freshman humanities courses. He strongly believed in a balance of teaching and research, and of science and the humanities. His students valued his help, encouragement, and spicy sense of humor. In later years, he developed a course in ecology for the nonscientist and was preparing a text on that subject when he died.

Professor Cochrane was a member of the American Society of Microbiology, The American Society for the Advancement of Science, The Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering, the Mycological Society of America, the American Phytopathological Society, and the Telluride Association, of which he was a past president. In 1965, he was honored as Fellow of the American Phytopathological Society. He was also a member of the honorary societies Sigma Xi and Phi Kappa Phi.

Surviving him are his wife, Jean; a son, Bruce J. Cochrane of Tampa, FL; a daughter, Nancy Cochrane of Falls Church, VA; three grandchildren; three sisters: Louise Rome of Chicago, Gladys Manley of Boston, and Elaine Batey of Merritt Island, FL; and several nieces and nephews.