

Antonios George Plakidas, 1895–1986

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Antonios George Plakidas, professor emeritus at Louisiana State University, died in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on November 21, 1986.

Dr. Plakidas was born September 7, 1895 in Ikaria, Greece, came to the United States in 1912 as an immigrant boy of 17, and served in the U.S. Army during 1917–1918. He became a naturalized citizen in 1918. He graduated valedictorian of his class from Mt. Hermon prep school in Massachusetts in 1920 and then

enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley, where he received a B.S. degree in 1924 and a Ph.D. in 1927. He was employed at Louisiana State University in 1927, where he did research on strawberry and vegetable crop diseases. He remained on the faculty at Louisiana State University for 33 years and retired as professor emeritus in 1960.

Dr. Plakidas was a diligent and productive researcher, publishing extensively. Early in his research career he discovered that the widespread degeneration disease of strawberries was viral in nature. He became an authority on diseases of strawberries and wrote *Strawberry Diseases*, a 292-page comprehensive treatise published by the LSU Press in 1964. He wrote a 131-page bulletin that was published in 1943 and revised in 1957 entitled *Diseases of Some Vegetable and Fruit Crops and Their Control*. Thirty thousand copies of this bulletin were distributed in Louisiana, throughout the United States, and in many foreign countries. He published more than 100 original papers in journals such as *Phytopathology*, *Journal of Agricultural Research*, *Plant Disease Reporter*, and *Mycologia*.

Early in the 1950s Dr. Plakidas initiated a project on diseases of ornamental plants and thereby became a pioneer in this area of research in the South. He soon established that color-breaking in camellia flowers was virus induced. His research on camellia diseases resulted in his recognition as an authority on camellia problems. The American Camellia Society elected him Fellow and

life member and dedicated its 1964 yearbook to him. In 1957 he was co-author on camellia culture in McGraw-Hill's *Encyclopedia of Science and Technology* and wrote a chapter on "Genetic and Virus-Induced Variegation in Camellias."

Dr. Plakidas was also an inspiring teacher, and many students, nationally and internationally, came to study under him.

Dr. Plakidas became a member of the American Phytopathological Society in 1920 and was elected Fellow of the Society in 1972. He served as president of the Southern Division of APS in 1939 and as Councilor from that division during 1942–1944. He was also a member of the Mycological Society of America. He served with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in Egypt and Greece during 1944–1946 and as member of FAO Mission to Greece in 1946. Dr. Plakidas took a sabbatical leave from Louisiana State University in 1954, during which time he taught a course at Cornell University and spent time as a visiting scientist at the University of California.

An autobiographical account, *It Could Happen Only in America*, by Dr. Plakidas appeared serially in several issues of the *Bot-Pot*, a newsletter of the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology at LSU. This was translated to Greek by Dr. Plakidas' niece and published in book form in Athens in 1966.

Dr. Plakidas was married to Artemise Rhodes, a former school teacher in the Baton Rouge area, in 1928. After retirement they spent considerable time at their camp on the Gulf of Mexico at Grand Isle, Louisiana, about 125 miles south of Baton Rouge. Dr. Plakidas often said that the beach at Grand Isle reminded him of his youth in Greece. He loved to swim and fish there.

In 1984 Dr. and Mrs. Plakidas were admitted to St. James Place, a retirement home in Baton Rouge. They were both in failing health; Dr. Plakidas suffered from Parkinson's disease, but his mind was perfectly clear to the end. Mrs. Plakidas died in 1987 at the age of 85, a year after her husband.

Their nephew and his wife, Sandy K. Plakidas and Shirley Voss Plakidas, were devoted attendants to their care during their long illness. In addition to them, Dr. Plakidas is survived by a sister and four brothers in Greece. He was preceded in death by three brothers.