

Arden Frederick Sherf, 1916-1989

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Arden Frederick Sherf, professor emeritus of plant pathology, died on September 19, 1989, in Ithaca, NY, at the age of 73 after a brief illness. He had 27 years of professional association with Cornell University, serving as the vegetable disease extension specialist in the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Arden was born in Brooklyn Center, MN, on August 7, 1916, the son of the late Fred E. and Alice

Lavina Stubbs Sherf. He was raised on a small vegetable and dairy farm at Hastings, MN. Upon graduating from North High School in Minneapolis, he entered the University of Minnesota, receiving his B.S. degree in agriculture in 1939. He worked toward an advanced degree in plant pathology beginning in 1939 at the university for two quarters before transferring to the University of Nebraska in 1939 on a fellowship from the Nebraska Certified Potato Growers Association. His studies were interrupted for military service in the U.S. Navy from 1942 to January 1946, where Arden served as a pharmacist mate, a submarine communications officer, and a research plant pathologist at Fort Detrick, MD. He remained active in the U.S. Naval Reserve for 20 years after the war, retiring with the rank of commander. Following World War II, Arden resumed his studies at the University of Nebraska, receiving his Ph.D. in plant pathology in 1948. His dissertation, "Infection and symptomatology of bacterial ring rot of potato caused by *Corynebacterium sepedonicum* (Speck. and Kotth.) Skapt. and Burkh," was directed by Professor Robert W. Goss.

Professor Sherf's professional career began at the University of Nebraska as assistant in pathology and assistant extension plant pathologist from 1946 to 1947 and later as an assistant plant pathologist and extension plant pathologist until 1949. He then moved to Iowa State University to serve as assistant and later associate plant pathologist and extension plant pathologist from 1949 to 1954. He continued his life-long interest in seed pathology problems and extension at Iowa State. Arden joined Cornell University in 1954 as an associate professor and later became professor of plant pathology, assuming the duties of Dr. Charles Chupp, long-remembered by old-time vegetable growers as the "grand old man" of vegetable pathology. At Cornell, Arden had the prime responsibility for vegetable disease extension in New York and served as departmental extension leader for most of his career. His research included disease studies with tomatoes, cabbage, potatoes, and melons; seed treatments with cabbage, celery, peppers, and tomatoes; and soil fumigation for control

of nematodes and soilborne diseases for numerous crops. Later in his career he devoted time to home vegetable gardens and air pollution injury to vegetation, and he was a strong supporter of the Master Gardener program within the state.

His dedication to the dissemination of disease control information affected all facets of the vegetable industry—growers, processors, county agents, and other agricultural specialists and agribusiness personnel. A major contribution in this area was coauthoring the textbook "Vegetable Diseases and Their Control" with Professor Chupp in 1960. This useful text was revised extensively in 1986 in collaboration with his former student, Dr. Alan MacNab. This edition, like the first, is a significant contribution to the art and practice of plant pathology.

Dr. Sherf's reputation as a leader in extension brought demand for his services on both national and international levels. He served as a member of review panels for several plant pathology departments. He was an unpaid consultant to seedsmen, vegetable processing firms, and fungicide companies. Professor Sherf's sabbatical leaves were spent as a lecturer at the University of California at Davis in 1961 and as a visiting specialist and consultant to the British Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at Cambridge in 1968 and to the Department of Agriculture of New South Wales, Australia, in 1975.

Dr. Sherf was an active member of The American Phytopathological Society since 1942, serving as chairman of numerous APS committees including Extension, Special Illustrations, Placement and Manpower, and Public Relations. He was elected a fellow of the Society in 1980. In 1983 his professional colleagues bestowed the APS Northeast Division Award of Merit upon him.

Aside from his professional accomplishments, Arden devoted his considerable energies to supporting youth activities and community affairs. He had a life-long interest in music, particularly jazz, and had an extensive collection of over 800 records. Another hobby was vegetable gardening, where he struggled with Tompkins County clay-loam soil to grow tomatoes, peppers, and eight other vegetables. As a youth, he played the saxophone, and he had his own dance band in high school and as an undergraduate student in college. He also served as manager of the University of Minnesota football team.

In the eight years of his retirement, Arden was an active volunteer, including the Kitchen Cupboard and the Tompkins Community Hospital Auxiliary, where he worked closely with families whose loved ones were facing serious operations. Arden and his wife, Jean, also traveled extensively and served as tour group leaders in Europe on numerous occasions. They especially enjoyed the many new friends they met.

Arden is survived by his wife, Jean; two daughters, Carol Flower and Andrea Smith; two sons, David and Stephen; a brother, Glenn; and 11 grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.