

Ronald P. Covey, Jr., 1929-1990

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Ronald P. Covey, Jr., died on March 31, 1990, due to complications of a brain tumor. Dr. Covey had undergone surgery for the tumor in December 1986 and September 1989. He will be missed as a scientist, friend, and advisor by all who had the opportunity to know and work with him.

Ronald Covey was born on August 19, 1929, in Jamestown, New York, where he received his early education. He earned a B.S. degree in animal science from the University of

Minnesota in 1955. He received both an M.S. degree in 1959 and a Ph.D. degree in 1962 in plant pathology, also from the University of Minnesota. Ron joined the faculty of Washington State University in July 1962 at the Tree Fruit Research Center in Wenatchee as a plant pathologist responsible for research on apple diseases. Although located in Wenatchee, his responsibilities for tree fruit diseases encompassed the states of Washington and Oregon, as well as other areas where his special knowledge was needed.

Dr. Covey was recognized by his peers in research, extension, and the fruit industry for his research on the control of apple and pear diseases. His research included several areas related to apple culture, more specifically collar rot, apple scab, fire blight, specific apple replant disease (SARD), powdery mildew, and the relationship of mycorrhiza to apple replant disease.

His research on fire blight and on monitoring *Erwinia amylovora* for resistance to streptomycin led to the development of a blight forecasting system applicable to Washington State; this system reduced the number of sprays applied and increased their effectiveness. It has been estimated that this program resulted in a savings to industry of about \$400,000 annually. Dr. Covey also was a leader in studies on SARD. He was unable to identify a specific cause of SARD, however, in cooperation with Dr. Nels Benson, he was able to control the disease with a general soil biocide. This relatively cheap control allowed the replanting of many orchard sites that otherwise would have been abandoned

for apple production. This research was significant because of the high cost of developing new orchards and the limited land available for new apple orchards in the mountain valleys near Wenatchee, Washington.

The role Ron played in the field of tree fruit research can best be expressed by the words of two of his co-workers, written to Ron's wife: "We have both known your husband, Ron, for many years and recognize his accomplishments in research on apple and pear diseases, as well as his ability to lead our group on fruit diseases and their control measures. Ron was one of the fathers of the Annual Western Orchard Pest and Disease Management Conference, and we will miss his attendance and participation. In The American Phytopathological Society, Ron was the key person to serve as chairman for the selection of student competition awards. Most recently, he helped in editing the replant disease section of the book, *Diseases of Temperate-Zone Fruit and Nut Crops*, to be published in 1991. Our trip to attend a conference in Yakima, Washington, resulted in the most cherished decision of all meetings; we decided to travel through the beautiful Wenatchee apple-production areas where Ron played a major role in assuring production of quality disease-free fruit."

Dr. Covey was internationally recognized for his expertise in the epidemiology and control of fire blight of apples and pears, which was illustrated by his invitations to participate in the Fire Blight Workshop in Mexico in December 1986 and in the Fifth International Workshop on Fire Blight in Belgium in June 1989.

In addition to his research, Dr. Covey was active as a graduate student advisor and in numerous professional societies, and was a source of information and advice to apple growers. Also, Ron was active in Gyro International and was a past president of the Wenatchee chapter.

He married Gail Hendry in 1952. Survivors include his wife, Gail, from East Wenatchee; one son, Bruce, from Pasco, Washington; two daughters, Joanne "Jo" Tully, from Sparks, Nevada, and Virginia "Ginny" Bromiley, from East Wenatchee; a brother, Bruce, from Simi Valley, California; and his grandchildren, Karen, Marie, Adam, Matthew, Kara, and Paige, who were a very important part of his life.