Paul E. Nelson, 1927 to 1996

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Paul E. Nelson, friend and colleague of some 40 years, passed away on 11 August 1996. Paul was born 26 May 1927 in Tisch Mills, WI, the first son of John and Zella Nelson. The family moved to southern California in 1936. After graduating from high school in 1945, Paul entered the U.S. Army Air Corps and served overseas as a staff sergeant with the 316th Bomb Wing in Okinawa.

Paul began his studies in the plant sciences in 1947 at Fullerton Junior College. In 1949, he matriculated at the University of California, Berkeley, completing his B.S. degree in plant pathology in 1951. As an undergraduate, he assisted Dr. Stephen Wilhelm, who became his graduate advisor and mentor. Paul began his graduate studies in plant pathology at Berkeley in 1951, with a special interest in strawberry root diseases. Paul completed his doctorate in 1955 and accepted a position as assistant professor at the Ornamentals Research Laboratory, Cornell University, Farmingdale, NY. He was named an associate professor in 1961. In 1965, Paul joined the plant pathology faculty at Pennsylvania State University (Penn State), University Park, as an associate professor with responsibilities for teaching and research on the diseases of ornamental plants and pathological anatomy. He advanced to the rank of professor in 1967 and served this position with distinction until his death.

When his long-time colleague and partner in research, T. A. Toussoun, joined the faculty at Penn State in 1970, they established the *Fusarium* Research Center, with Paul as its director. The Center became internationally recognized for its outstanding work, attracting the collaborative efforts of *Fusarium* researchers worldwide. During the past decade, because of Paul's interests, the Center became known for its studies in mycotoxicology and for collaborative efforts in this field with the USDA National Veterinary Sciences Laboratory at Ames, IA; the Medical School of the University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL; and the Programme on Mycotoxins and Experimental Carcinogenesis of the South African Medical Research Council, Cape Town, South Africa.

Paul published over 250 research papers during his career. Of these, 140 were published on *Fusarium*, often with his collaborators. Of note, because of the immense impact they had on advancing research on *Fusarium*, were the *Pictorial Guide to the Identification of Fusarium Species*; *Fusarium Species. An Illustrated Manual For Identification*; *Fusarium; Diseases, Identity and Taxonomy*; and *Toxigenic Fusarium Species: Identity and Mycotoxicology*. In addition, Paul made significant contributions to floriculture pathology, with almost 100 publications in this field. He also took justifiable pride in his published studies in pathological plant anatomy. His colleagues were amazed to see the fine work that such a large individual was capable of producing with a microtome!

Paul was asked to speak at national and international symposia. He also presented many invited lectures including the keynote address at the 28th Annual Congress of the South African Society for Plant Pathology in Pretoria (1990), the Nusbaum Lecture at North Carolina State University in Raleigh (1991), the J. C. Walker Lecture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1992), and the Black Award Lecture at Penn State (1992).

Paul was also an outstanding teacher and advisor of graduate studies. For almost 30 years, he taught a course on the diseases of ornamental and floricultural plants, pathological techniques, pathological plant anatomy, taxonomy and biology of *Fusarium*, and mycotoxicology. Paul chaired the studies of nine master and five doctoral students in plant pathology and was a sought-after advisor of many graduate students in biology, botany, and horticulture. In recognition of his abilities, Paul held academic appointments in plant pathology at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, and the University of Sydney, Australia. His sabbatical leaves were spent at the University of California, Berkeley (1964), Cornell University (1973), North Carolina State University (1976), the University of Sydney, Australia (1976, 1983, and 1988), and the Programme on Mycotoxins and Experimental Carcinogenesis of the South African Medical Research Council (1985).

Paul made significant contributions to the Department of Plant Pathology at Penn State, to the College of Agriculture, and to the University itself. Notable was his service as interim head of the Department of Plant Pathology, on the Graduate School Council, the Strategic Planning Committee for Research and Graduate Studies, and the University Council. Paul was an active member of The American Phytopathological Society, serving as a member of several committees, as chair of the Phytopathological Monographs and Review Committee (1976) and the Publications Committee (1976), and as a senior editor of *Phytopathology* (1970–1972). Paul was a member of the Mycological Society of America, the U.S. Federation for Culture Collections, the American Society of Microbiology, and the Australian Plant Pathology Society.

Recognition of Paul's colleagues' high regard for his many contributions during his 40-year career is seen in his being named a Fellow of The American Phytopathological Society (APS) (1985) and in his receipt of many other awards including the Pennsylvania State University Faculty Scholars Medal for Outstanding Achievement in Life and Health Sciences (1984), the APS Northeastern Division Award of Merit (1986), and the Alex and Jesse C. Black Award for Excellence in Research (1992). *Fusarium nelsonii* Marasas et Logrieco was named in honor of the late Professor Paul E. Nelson in recognition of his invaluable contributions to *Fusarium* taxonomy. Many colleagues gathered at Penn State to pay tribute to his achievements at the Paul E. Nelson Memorial Symposium in November 1997. Chapters based on papers presented at this Symposium are to be published by APS Press in a volume on *Fusarium*.

Dr. Paul E. Nelson was a truly outstanding teacher, researcher, mentor, and professional. All who worked with him enjoyed his fertile sense of humor. He got great pleasure in telling of how he set up and successfully carried out pranks on his associates. Paul had many talents. He loved football and was proud to have been on the championship 316th Bomb Group team. He loved music also and played coronet in the famed UC Blue Band. He loved to tell of how he marched down Colorado Avenue all the way from Pasadena to the Rose Bowl tooting "Hail to California." Paul was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He married Barbara Enyeart in June 1950. They have three children, Katherine, John, and Nancy, and six grandchildren. Paul was an active and committed Christian. Paul's only brother, Dr. Merritt Nelson, also a plant pathologist, currently serves as head of the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Arizona, Tucson.