Harry Ernest Duncan, 1936 to 1997

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Harry E. Duncan, professor emeritus of plant pathology and extension specialist at North Carolina State University, died at Duke University Hospital on 14 April 1997. Although he had looked forward to retirement, a degenerative lung disease limited this phase of his life to only 2 years. While battling unexpected and prolonged complications from a lung transplant, Harry survived for months largely via his enormous courage and hope and the support of his family. Dr. Duncan's professional contributions included invaluable research on a range of crops, graduate education and research, an outstanding extension program that encompassed 19 years as extension specialist-in-charge in the Plant Pathology Department, and University service.

Harry was born in Hartford, WV, on 20 November 1936, but he grew up in Newell, WV. Harry was awarded his B.S. degree in horticulture in 1959 and both his M.S. (1961) and Ph.D. (1966) degrees in plant pathology from West Virginia University. His Ph.D. thesis research, under the direction of M. E. Gallegly, was on the physiology of compatible and incompatible host-parasite combinations in the *Phytophthora* late blight disease of potato. In addition to his formal education, Harry gained much practical experience by leasing and operating a rather large vegetable farm after high school graduation until he completed his M.S. degree. Earlier, Harry worked on this same farm for 8 years while in grade school and high school. His West Virginia heritage, including his farm, and University experiences served as a source of strength and pride for Dr. Duncan.

On 1 March 1965, Harry accepted a position as an extension plant pathology specialist and instructor in the Department of Plant Pathology at North Carolina State University and was stationed on a state experiment station at Fletcher, NC, in the western part of the state. After 5 years of extension and research contributions on vegetable crops, Dr. Duncan was appointed extension specialist-in-charge of the Plant Pathology Department and moved to the Raleigh campus. While rapidly advancing through the professional ranks, he held the specialist-in-charge position until 1989.

With a broad background in vegetables, Professor Duncan contributed greatly to the swiftly developing, trellised tomato industry and to other vegetable crops in western North Carolina during the mid to late 1960s. His practical research, work with growers, and relevant publications including ones on control of foliage diseases and general production practices were vital to this industry. Similar programs focused on potatoes, trellised cucumbers, beans (especially bean root rots), and strawberries. Professor Duncan also facilitated interactions between extension agents, growers, and interested agri-business enterprises.

After moving to the Raleigh campus, Professor Duncan continued his extension work on numerous crops, ranging from turf and home garden plants to corn. As a specialist-in-charge, Professor Duncan focused on a number of innovative programs. He was an early advocate of the involvement of extension for home gardens and ornamentals. His regular appearance on the TV show "The Backyard Gardener" provided an excellent means of information delivery including answers to incoming 'grower' questions

on highly diverse plant disease problems. Professor Duncan also contributed much to the proper and safe use of pesticides for disease management. During his leadership of the plant pathology extension program at N.C. State, outstanding extension programs and the expanded Plant Disease and Insect Clinic received much recognition at the local, national, and international levels.

Dr. Duncan contributed extensively to our fundamental understanding of plant diseases. His findings ranged from factors affecting chemical control of seedpiece decay and blackleg of potato, the impact of late blight on oxygen utilization in compatible and incompatible potatoes upon infection by *Phytophthora infestans*, and the infection of corn by *Aspergillus flavus* and associated aflatoxin production under various field conditions. He also determined the effects of the sting and stubby-root nematodes and the gray leaf spot disease on corn yields. In addition, Professor Duncan and his collaborators developed disease management tactics for corn, peanut, and other crops. He and associates also did early research in characterizing the occurrence of nematicide residues in a number of vegetable crops.

Graduate education was a rewarding portion of Dr. Duncan's career. He codirected the research of two Ph.D. graduate students and served on a number of advisory committees. His ever-present pleasant personality and enthusiasm contributed much toward encouraging these students as well as other associates.

Service to his profession and University as well as his grower clientele was central to Dr. Duncan's career. He was an active participant in many organizations including The American Phytopathological Society. Dr. Duncan served on the APS Extension, Second Journal, Pesticide Nomenclature, and Chemical Control committees. He and his wife, Carmela, often were hosts for the N.C. State receptions at the APS Annual Meetings. In addition to his work on innumerable departmental and college committees, Dr. Duncan served two terms as a senator on the N.C. State University Faculty Senate.

Dr. Duncan was recognized for his scholarship and extension and research contributions in many ways. He was presented the Outstanding Non-Producer Award by the Corn Growers' Association of North Carolina; selected to participate in the North Carolina Agriculture in the World Program; elected to Gamma Sigma Delta, Phi Epsilon Phi, and Sigma Xi; and listed in American Men and Women of Science, Who's Who in the South, and Personalities of the South.

Harry Ernest Duncan and Carmela Rose Mangano were married on 14 June 1958 and enjoyed 39 years together. They were blessed with three children: Deborah Ann Miller (Salisbury, NC), Pamela Sue Yount (Ocean Isle, NC), and Harry Ernest Duncan II (Washington, NC). They also have two much-loved grandchildren, Christina Miller and Jacob Yount.

All of Dr. Duncan's many friends and associates cherished and appreciated his enthusiasm for plant pathology and for life. He was a superb gardener and craftsman, especially in woodworking, and enjoyed fishing, hunting, and sports in general. Harry was a faithful member of St. Raphael Catholic Church in Raleigh. Dr. Duncan is remembered as a distinguished colleague whose 30-year career in plant pathology and his ever-present smile, dedication, and enthusiasm will continue to resonate in the lives of many associates and friends as well as his family members.