

# Clifford Nicks Stark

*June 14, 1891 — October 14, 1978*

Clifford Nicks Stark died on October 14, 1978, at the Murfreesboro Health Care Center, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He had been a professor of bacteriology from 1932 until his retirement in 1951.

Clifford N. Stark was born on a farm at Cumberland Furnace, Dickson County, Tennessee, on June 14, 1891. He attended rural schools and worked on farms until he was fourteen. By working, trading, and saving he accumulated \$1,000 during this period. He spent the next four years working his way through the Industrial and Training School at Huntingdon, Carroll County, Tennessee. His college training was interrupted by a seven-month tour of duty in the Signal Corps as a machine gunner in World War I.

He attended Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana, and graduated from Middle Tennessee State University in June 1919. He earned his way through college doing farm work. From 1920 through 1922 he taught and was principal at a high school in Christiana, Tennessee. During this time he also attended George Peabody College for Teachers.

On June 28, 1921, he married Pauline Whitson of Centerville, Hickman County, Tennessee, a home economics teacher. They had no children. They continued high school teaching and both received the Bachelor of Science Degree from Peabody College, Kentucky, in 1924. In the fall of 1924 they both entered Cornell University as graduate students. They continued to be associated with the Department of Dairy Science in the College of Agriculture for the next twenty-seven years. Pauline Stark was granted a Master of Science degree in 1928 and continued teaching as well as conducting research in microbiology until her retirement. Clifford Stark was granted a Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1927. He became an assistant professor in 1927, a professor in 1932, and an emeritus professor in 1951.

His primary area of research interest was in the microbial contaminants of food and water. Among his research contributions in this area were the development of culture media for the detection of microorganisms indicating fecal pollution in water and foods. His formate ricinoleate medium for the detection of enteric bacteria is still in use today. He published some sixty papers based on his research while at Cornell University. For many years he acted as a consultant on problems related to sanitation and contamination in the food industry and in quality control of water supplies.

After his retirement from Cornell he returned to Tennessee and joined the staff of the Middle Tennessee State University where he taught and served as the head of the Department of Agriculture and as the manager of the University's farm. Because of his many contributions to Middle State Tennessee University, the Stark Science Center and the Stark Experimental Farm at that institution have been named in his honor. Following his retirement from that university in 1961 he spent the ensuing years raising beef cattle on his farm near Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Professor Stark will be remembered by his students for his dedication to the principles of sanitation. His lectures were spiced by illustrations of poor sanitary practice that he encountered and discouraged. Clifford N. Stark was an active and dedicated member of the generation of microbiologists who decreased human suffering and increased longevity by bringing scientific sanitary practices and laws to the food and water supplies of America.

*W. Dexter Bellamy, James C. White, Paul J. VanDemark*