

Alfred William Avens

March 31, 1901 — October 4, 1976

Alfred William Avens was professor of chemistry in the Department of Food Science and Technology at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, New York, until his retirement on June 30, 1967, after forty-one years of distinguished service with the University.

Dr. Avens was born in Water Mill, New York, where he attended elementary and high school. He entered Colgate University in 1919 and received his B-S. degree in 1923. Dr. Avens served as an instructor in chemistry at Colgate from 1923 to 1926, at which time he was awarded the Master of Science degree. He entered Cornell University as an assistant in chemistry in 1926, became an instructor in 1930, and received his Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1935 under Dr. Wilder Bancroft. Later in 1935, Dr. Avens was appointed to the staff of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, where he fulfilled a fruitful and distinguished career. His excellent qualities were recognized by the University in 1961 by his appointment as head of the Analytical Division of the Department of Food Science and Technology.

He was the corecipient of the Association of Economic Entomologists Eastern Branch Award in 1940 and again in 1942. He was a member of the American Chemical Society, Entomological Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Association of Official Analytical Chemists, the Association of American Feed and Fertilizer Control Officials, Alpha Chi Sigma, and Sigma Xi.

Dr. Avens's career was devoted to analytical chemistry, and he was a highly respected leader in the field. He contributed to the methodology of measuring traces of pesticides in and on foods and adopted many established methods to eliminate interference of naturally occurring plant materials. His classical collaborative work with Dr. G. W. Pearce on arsenicals, including phase-rule studies on calcium arsenate, and with Drs. P. J. Chapman and G. W. Pearch on petroleum oil sprays were pioneering efforts in the field of pest-control chemicals.

Professor Avens's interest was not limited to pest-control agents, as he was instrumental in the development and operation of that section of the Analytical Division responsible for analysis of feed, fertilizer, and liming material inspection samples submitted by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. During his tenure, this section became one of the leading state control laboratories in the country. He was the author of fifty technical publications, several patent descriptions, and numerous short articles.

No resolution about Dr. Avens would be complete without mention of his cooperative spirit. Fellow faculty members gratefully remember his willingness to help in their analytical problems and data evaluation, and his careful, fair, and constructive aid in developing and testing new analytical procedures. His friendly counsel, criticism, and advice to the many persons who have sought his aid will be long remembered.

John B. Bourke, James C. Moyer, Willard B. Robinson