

Kenneth Gardner Parker

March 22, 1906 — October 1, 1981

Kenneth G. Parker, professor emeritus of plant pathology, died suddenly on October 1, 1981, thus ending more than a half-century of association with Cornell University.

Dr. Parker was born in Little York, Indiana, on March 22, 1906. After graduating from high school in Little York, he entered DePauw University and received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1928. His first association with Cornell was in summer school, in 1927, when he enrolled in Elementary Mycology, and General Plant Pathology. He began graduate study in the Plant Pathology Department in September 1928. He took a leave of absence from the Graduate School beginning October 1, 1931, and served as graduate assistant to Dr. T. E. Rawlins at the University of California, Berkeley. There he worked on the “buckskin” disease of sweet cherry and also continued his Cornell thesis research on the fire blight disease of pear and apple. He returned to Cornell to continue graduate study in September 1933 and was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree in January 1934. Soon thereafter he accepted a position as extension fruit pathologist at Pennsylvania State University but resigned when he was appointed assistant professor of plant pathology at Cornell in July 1934. Dr. Parker was stationed at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research in Yonkers, New York, where, together with other Cornell faculty, he conducted research on the Dutch elm disease. The results from this research were a major contribution to the understanding of this important disease and its causal organism. Shortly after the beginning of World War II the elm disease project was terminated, and Dr. Parker returned to Ithaca to continue his studies on diseases of fruit crops. He was appointed associate professor in 1947, professor in 1951, and professor emeritus on his retirement in 1970.

Professor Parker made many contributions to fruit tree pathology. He spent several years helping develop, perfect, and test spraying and dusting equipment for use in commercial orchards. He was instrumental in establishing the effectiveness of streptomycin blossom sprays for control of fire blight. He was also responsible for perfecting the gibberellic acid treatment of “yellows”-affected sour cherry trees, which decreased crop losses from this disease. His detailed analyses of virus diseases under orchard conditions yielded some of our best information on the dissemination of viruses of perennial plants. In cooperation with others he initiated studies on the relation of nematodes to root disease problems concerning orchard trees.

Professor Parker served as fruit tree extension pathologist from 1967 until his retirement. He was recognized as a leading world authority in the diagnosis of complex diseases and other disorders of fruit trees. Dr. Parker was

especially helpful to graduate students, young faculty, and to others concerned with tree fruit production in New York.

Professor Parker persistently made efforts to broaden his knowledge. In the early forties he spent a sabbatic leave studying soil phenomena at the University of Wisconsin. To become better acquainted with the numerous virus-caused diseases of stone fruits, he divided a leave in 1951 between Riverside, California, and Wenatchee, Washington. In 1957-58 he did bibliographical work on *Verticillium* wilt of fruit trees for the United States Department of Agriculture, in Washington, D.C. This work resulted in a definitive review of the topics.

As a result of his fundamental research on diseases of tree fruits, Dr. Parker gained an international reputation. The students he trained, now located in various regions of the United States and in other parts of the world, are currently continuing this high level of research.

Professor Parker's contributions were recognized in 1961, when the New York State Horticultural Society presented him with a citation noting his contributions to the fruit industry. The citation noted his work on virus diseases, on the development of disease-free planting stock, on fire blight, and on nematodes and associated organisms, and cited his cooperation in the development of spray machinery. Also noted were his patience and cooperative efforts to help fruit growers and extension agents to diagnose, interpret, and control fruit disease problems. In 1970 a similar citation was presented him by the National Apple Institute.

Professor Parker held memberships in the American Phytopathological Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (fellow), the American Institute of Biological Sciences, Sigma Xi, and Phi Kappa Phi.

He is survived by his wife, Elinor Barnes Parker, of Trumansburg; a niece, Donna Morgan Smith, of Louisville, Kentucky; an uncle; and several grandnieces and grandnephews and their children.

Steven V. Beer, Leon J. Tyler, William F. Mai