

Robert Charles Cetas

February 23, 1922 — June 14, 1979

Robert Charles Cetas, professor of plant pathology, passed away June 14, 1979, in Riverhead, New York, after being associated with Cornell University for thirty-two years as graduate student, assistant, associate, and full professor, and professor emeritus.

He was born February 23, 1922, in Harbor Springs, Michigan. Following three years service in the army (1942-46) he returned to his undergraduate studies at Michigan State University where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture in 1947. He then matriculated at Cornell University as a doctoral candidate in the field of plant pathology and, during 1947-52, was responsible for potato pathology work on Long Island. He was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy in 1952 for his work on the potato "A" virus. On July 1, 1952, Dr. Cetas was appointed assistant professor of plant pathology and began work at the Long Island Vegetable Research Station near Riverhead. He succeeded Dr. Howe Cunningham, who had held that post for many years. Bob was promoted to associate professor in 1956 and professor in 1971, a position he held until his early retirement on June 11, 1979. On that date he was granted professor emeritus status by the Cornell University Board of Trustees.

Although research was his major assignment at the station, he frequently became involved in extension activities such as identifying potato and vegetable diseases, speaking at meetings, and writing for county publications. He was a constant cooperator in field trials with Cornell (Ithaca-based) specialists. His readiness to help with disease problems was always appreciated by farmers, county agents, agribusinessmen, and colleagues. During his long association with Cornell, Bob conducted experiments on the control of late blight, scab, *Rhizoctonia*, *Verticillium* wilt, leaf roll, black leg, black spot, nematode root rot, and ring rot of potatoes. He also worked on black rot, black leg, wirestem, and downy mildew of cabbage and cauliflower, damping-off of spinach, blotch of onions, and several other vegetable diseases. He was a leader of a long-term project involving the screening and evaluating of new potato fungicides. This included studying efficacy, phytotoxicity, dosage, and spray schedules of these fungicides. Potato seedpiece treatments received much of his attention in recent years. His research has resulted in potato fungicide and nematicide registrations of critical value to Long Island farmers. He authored or coauthored over 140 papers during his career.

Dr. Cetas was an active participant in many scientific and professional organizations. He served on a number of committees of the American Phytopathological Society (APS) and the Potato Association of America. He was

a frequent contributor of scientific papers to the publications of these organizations and was a member of the editorial board of the APS publication *Fungicide and Nematicide Tests*, At the time of his death he was preparing a paper for presentation at the IXth Congress of Plant Protection in Washington, D.C. These research results could lead to a breakthrough in controlling late blight, one of the most devastating diseases of potatoes. He also made significant contributions to the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology as a member of a special task force studying the uses of energy in agriculture. He participated with other pathologists in gathering statistics and data for use by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in their appraisal of a fungicide in worldwide use.

Dr. Cetas had been a member of Sigma Xi since 1952. He was a long-time member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Institute of Biological Sciences. He was also affiliated with the Society of Nematologists, International Society of Plant Pathologists, Pesticide Association of New York State, and the American Society for Testing and Materials. He was elected a member of the New York Academy of Sciences in 1972.

Dr. Cetas' most significant contributions have been of most value to the farmers and agribusinessmen of Long Island. The results of his research are being used in disease-control practices of the vegetable and potato growers in that area and throughout New York State. His knowledge of food production was very broad and thus his opinions and advice were sought after by many farmers with whom he may have had contact. Among his peers in the science of plant pathology he was highly respected. Testimony to the esteem in which he was held was tendered on the occasion of his retirement. Plaques were presented by the Alumni Association of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the Long Island Farm Bureau, the Long Island Agricultural Marketing Association, the Cooperative Extension Association of Suffolk County, and the Pesticide Association of New York State.

He was a very devoted and loving husband and father. He dedicated his life to his family, his church, and his profession. Soon after he and his wife moved to Riverhead, they started a bible study class in their home. From this beginning came the Calvary Baptist Church of Riverhead. Over the years Bob served his church as Sunday school teacher, deacon, trustee, and chairman of the building committee. He is survived by his wife, Henrietta; son, Charles, of East Lansing, Michigan; and daughter, Cheryl, of Montgomery, Alabama.

William F. Mai, Maurie Semel, Arden F. Sherf