

Siegfried Eric Lienk

October 16, 1916 — June 25, 1988

From 1949 to 1983, Professor Siegfried E. (Sieg) Lienk had a productive career as an entomologist in Cornell's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, New York. He not only made a number of important contributions to his science, but he also was much appreciated by the fruit growers of New York for providing them with effective means of coping with their mite and insect problems.

Born in Gary, Indiana, he attended grade and high school in South Chicago. Over the following six years, his time was divided between working as a mechanic for an equipment manufacturing company, and attending the Chicago Christian Junior College. (His father was a Lutheran pastor.) Having developed a deep interest in insects, he decided to seek a career in that field. In 1940, he entered the University of Idaho where, two years later, he received a B.S. degree in entomology.

In June 1942, he was appointed an agent in the U.S. Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine. His primary duties were to locate new infestations of the pear psylla in pear orchards of the states of Idaho and Washington. However, later in 1942, after our nation became involved in World War II, he resigned his Bureau job and enlisted in the Army. Because of his entomological training, he was assigned to the Army's Medical Corps. From late 1942 to 1946, he saw service in North Africa, Italy, Okinawa and Japan. Perhaps his most important experience was the part he played in controlling a massive outbreak of typhus in Naples, Italy. This louse-transmitted disease was controlled by the use of a then-new pesticide—DDT. After returning to civilian life in 1946, he became a graduate student at the University of Illinois. In 1948, he spent six months in Alaska as a member of a team which conducted biological and control studies on mosquitoes, black flies, and punkies for the U.S. Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine.

On June 16, 1949, Sieg was appointed a research associate in the Department of Entomology of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station. After receiving his doctorate degree from the University of Illinois, he was advanced to an assistant professorship on March 1, 1950. Initially, he conducted studies on the biology and control of cherry pests and on the species of spider mites that are pests of apple and the other tree fruits. He and a colleague, E.H. Glass, also started a new project. Its objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of the various kinds of equipment being used to apply pesticidal dusts and sprays to fruit trees.

Of the cherry pests, he gave most attention to the two species of fruit flies which produce wormy cherries, and to the European red mite, an apple pest. Before Sieg joined the staff, several local workers, in their studies of petroleum oils as pesticides, had found that the overwintering egg of this mite became increasingly susceptible to oil sprays up to the start of tree growth in the spring. Following up on this lead, Sieg was able to demonstrate that a single oil spray applied just ahead of egg hatch can give commercial control of this six- or seven-generation pest for the year. A succession of new acaricides then became available. In testing these, Sieg found that while most of them gave good control, initially, the mite eventually became resistant to them. Up to the present time, however, this mite has not been able to develop resistance to oil sprays. Its mode of action is physical—it “smothers” the eggs.

In addition to the foregoing work, Sieg found time to assemble and maintain a collection of local insects for the use of the department. His skill as a taxonomist was really challenged, however, in a project he and a colleague, P.J. Chapman, started in 1974. Its objective was to learn when the flight period(s) of the larger species of moths (*Macrolepidoptera*) occurred in the Geneva, New York area by use of black light traps. Over a five-year period these traps were visited daily from mid-April to early November. Of the 30,000 moths collected annually, 600 species were represented. In addition to the scientific value of these data, information was provided for determining when control measures should be used for species of economic importance.

The Lienk-Chapman team also conducted another large-scale project. Sought was an update on the number of native species that had adopted apple as a host after this plant was introduced to North America in colonial times. Since all pests, old and new, had been reduced to low levels after growers started using pesticides near the end of the 19th century, these workers conducted their studies in abandoned orchards and in cow-planted stands of wild apple trees. Species found feeding on apples were classified as using them as a primary, secondary or accidental host. A number of potentially new apple pests were discovered. This study was reported in a book published by the Geneva Station in 1971.

Professor Lienk retired in 1983 and was named professor emeritus. In retirement he continued to make Geneva his base of operations. While he did some traveling and was active in several community organizations, he spent a considerable amount of time at his office and laboratory at the Geneva Station. In fact, he visited his office just a week before his death.

Sieg was a friendly, cooperative, department-loyal person who was well liked by the staff at all levels. For his fun-making talents, he usually became the life of the party at departmental social affairs. He will be missed by his

many friends. That there were many, was evident from the unusually large numbers of persons who attended his memorial service.

He is survived by his widow, Mary, and a daughter, Laura Lee Lienk, of Watsonville, California. He was predeceased by his first wife, Laura Irene Ross Lienk, and a daughter, Marta Ross Lienk, who were killed in an automobile accident in 1965.

Edward H. Glass, George A. Schaefers, Paul J. Chapman