

Emil Frederick Taschenberg

June 4, 1916 — February 5, 2002

Emil Frederick Taschenberg, Professor Emeritus of Entomology-Geneva, was a tireless worker for the New York grape growers at the Vineyard Research Lab in Fredonia, New York, where he lived and served as Director from 1945 until his retirement in 1983. In 1991, the main laboratory building at the research station was renamed the “Taschenberg Lab” in his honor.

“I’m sure the thing most remembered about Tasch by growers, industry representatives, and the Lab staff was his work ethic”, said Rick Dunst, Research Support Specialist at Fredonia. Wendell Roelofs, Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor, a close collaborator of Taschenberg’s and the current Chairman of the Entomology Department-Geneva corroborated this, when he said, “Tasch was one of the hardest working entomologists I know”.

Taschenberg’s career began at Gettysburg College where he graduated with an A.B. degree in Biology in 1938. He received his Ph.D. degree in Entomology from Cornell University in 1945. He was appointed that year as Assistant Professor of Entomology at Cornell’s Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, and was stationed at Cornell’s Vineyard Laboratory at Fredonia throughout his career as Associate Professor (1948-59) and Professor (1959-83). He retired as Professor Emeritus in 1983, but continued to contribute to the grape industry through research and extension for several years.

Taschenberg’s research focused on the biology, ecology and control of minor and major insect pests of grape. Most of the research was on the control of major grape pests, such as the grape berry moth, Eastern grape leafhopper, and currant borer. He also was instrumental in the design and refinement of a hooded boom sprayer for vineyards that applied materials effectively and reduced pesticide drift compared with standard sprayers. He was concerned with the tractor operator’s safety and helped to eliminate the need for wearing protective clothing and a respirator when applying insecticides by developing an air-filter pressurization unit that was mounted on a tractor cab.

In work on the direct control of pests, he evaluated insecticides not only from the standpoint of performance against insects, but also determined the persistence of the insecticides on grapes. He developed spray programs that shifted from the persistent insecticides to those that were relatively short-lived without sacrificing effectiveness and without increasing the number of spray treatments. He was renowned for working weekends and holidays to evaluate experimental treatments in his dedication to the grape industry. His advice on control of grape pests was widely sought and well respected.

Taschenberg also was a pioneer in using insect sex pheromones in the field for pest control. He collaborated with Dr. Roelofs for many years on projects in which he mass reared insects, such as the grape berry moth, choke cherry leafroller, and cecropia moth, for identification of the sex pheromone compounds. He developed innovative methods to produce the tens of thousands of individuals needed for these studies, and his great interest in the projects was reflected in the long hours of his spare time that he spent on these projects. He also conducted many field trials on the use of pheromones in vineyards for monitoring and control of pests. In this regard, he was one of the first scientists to test a number of experimental techniques to permeate a field with pheromone for the mating disruption technique. His efforts led to a commercial product for pheromone control of the grape berry moth.

Dr. Taschenberg took a sabbatical leave in 1970-71 at the USDA Caribbean Fruit Fly Investigations Laboratory in Miami, Florida to work on the biology of the Caribbean fruit fly. He was a member of the Entomological Society of America, the Entomological Society of Florida, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, Sigma Xi, and Phi Kappa Phi.

Tasch was an avid fisherman and displayed many mounted specimens at the Fredonia Lab that he donated to the Buffalo Museum of Science after his retirement. He also played golf, which he took up in his later years and especially enjoyed in his years of retirement in Florida.

Surviving Tasch are his wife, Shirley, Hudson, Florida; two daughters, Ellen Marle Minor, Clearwater, Florida, and Sharon E. Taschenberg of Lafayette, California; a brother, Ernest J. Taschenberg, Baltimore, Maryland; three grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Richard Dunst, Haruo Tashiro, Wendell Roelofs