

Benjamin E. Clark

October 3, 1914 — May 26, 1983

Benjamin E. Clark, professor emeritus of seed investigations, was born and raised on a truck farm in Southampton, New York. An early interest in plants led to his matriculation in the College of Agriculture at Cornell, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1940. He accepted a position as farm foreman in the Department of Seed Investigations at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, starting July 1, 1940, but after seventeen months he resigned to enter the U.S. Army. He had three years of active duty in World War II, including combat service in Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, and Germany.

After his discharge in November 1945, Ben returned to Cornell, where he studied under Dr. H. C. Thompson, receiving a Master of Science degree in vegetable crops in 1946. He then went to Michigan State College (now University) where he was Dr. Sylvan Wittwer's first Doctor of Philosophy student, receiving his degree in horticulture-plant physiology in 1948. In September of that year Ben returned to the Experiment Station at Geneva as assistant professor of seed investigations. He was promoted to associate professor in 1952 and to professor in 1956, retiring June 30, 1980.

In 1952 Ben was appointed head of the Department of Seed Investigations, a position he held until October 1968, when he was appointed assistant director of the Experiment Station and assistant director of research for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. He remained in this position until February 1977, when he requested to return to field and laboratory research. During his tenure as assistant director of the Experiment Station he was responsible for preparation of programs, architectural planning reviews, and oversight of construction of several new buildings.

Ben established a reputation as an efficient and progressive researcher and administrator in correlating seed testing and seed law enforcement. He was soft-spoken and reserved—a very effective listener—and he had the ability to come up with concise and effective summaries and/or solutions to problems under discussion. Under his leadership new equipment and national personnel were added to the station's seed testing and seed research programs, and new programs were established in seed physiology and seed microbiology. He advised a number of students who were working for advanced degrees in seed technology at Cornell.

During his career Ben authored or coauthored more than one hundred scientific papers that significantly advanced our knowledge in seed science and technology. He conducted extensive investigations on development

of a supplemental cold test to determine the ability of seeds to germinate under unfavorable field conditions. This enabled seedsmen, growers, and processors to better predict field performance.

Ben promoted the use of high-quality seed, encouraging cooperation among the New York Seed Improvement Cooperative, Inc., Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Atlantic Seedsmen Association, and the Northeast Seed Control Officials. He worked closely as well with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets in implementation of the New York State seed laws. He was chairman of the New York Seed Law Revision Committee from 1953 to 1955 and, as such, wrote most of the present law. For many years he coauthored a seed inspection report that listed the quality and labeling of seeds sold within New York State the preceding year.

Ben was an active member of the Association of Official Seed Analysts. At various times he served as editor of its *Proceedings*; as chairman of the Editorial Committee; as vice president, president, and chairman of the Research Committee; and as chairman of several subcommittees and was a member of the legislative and constitution committees. He was presented the association's Award of Merit in 1968. He was a past board member of the Council of Agricultural Science and Technology. At the time of his death he was serving as secretary-treasurer of the New York State Seed Association, of which he was an honorary member. He belonged to numerous professional societies, including the American Society of Agronomy, the American Society for Horticultural Science, and Sigma Xi.

Ben's influence was felt far beyond the scientific community. He spent thousands of hours working with the Boy Scouts of America and with his church. In scouting he received the Silver Beaver Award, the highest honor given to scouters. He was a member of the executive board of the Finger Lakes Council, served as a member of the council's Membership Committee, and served as chairman of the Advancement Committee. He also had been active in many other phases of scouting throughout his lifetime in Geneva.

Ben was a member of the Board of Deacons, a member of the Session, and an elder at the First Presbyterian Church. He was president of the Board of Trustees before the church adopted the unicameral system. He had served as chairman of the Interpretation and Stewardship Committee and also as chairman of the Christian Education Committee. A number of years ago he had been active on the church's building committee.

He was also a member of the Finger Lakes Torch Club, an international discussion group.

Survivors include his wife, Sarah Wolstenholme Clark; a son, Christopher, associate professor of plant pathology at Louisiana State University; a daughter, Mrs. Constance Clark Smith, who lives in Randolph, New York; and four grandchildren.

Donald W. Barton, Gary E. Harman, Morrill T. Vittum