

# Walter Hagemeyer Burkholder

*February 1, 1891 — January 31, 1983*

Walter H. Burkholder was known affectionately to his many friends as “Burkie.” He was born in Crawfordsville, Indiana, where he obtained his A.B. degree in botany and English from Wabash College in 1913. He then joined the Department of Plant Pathology [at Cornell] as a fellow to begin his doctoral program. This association with Cornell University continued forty-six years, until his retirement and appointment as professor emeritus on July 1, 1959. Burkie received his Ph.D. degree in 1917; held an appointment as investigator until 1921, when he was designated assistant professor; and was appointed professor in 1927.

Burkie began his scientific career investigating fungi that cause disease in plants. In particular he was concerned with diseases of beans. For his outstanding research he received a Meritorious Service Award from the Bean Improvement Cooperative, a national organization dedicated to improvement of bean crops. He became a world authority on bacteria that cause disease in plants. For many years Burkie was editor of the section on phytopathogenic bacteria in Bergey’s *Manual of Determinative Bacteriology*, a definitive reference work for bacteriologists. Over the years he assembled a large collection of plant pathogenic bacteria, which he made available to scientists all over the world. For many years he taught a section of the advanced graduate course on bacterial diseases of plants. His numerous research contributions ranged from fundamental studies on the physiology and taxonomy of these organisms to development of resistant bean varieties by which to control them and reduce losses sustained by bean growers. He was a member of Sigma Xi, the Society of American Bacteriologists, the Ecological Society of America, and the New York Academy of Sciences. He was a life member of the American Phytopathological Society and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Burkie was an avid reader of poetry and fiction and especially enjoyed light opera. He was a connoisseur of fine food and liquor, whose subtle delights he happily introduced to others. Burkie was also an outstanding person who exemplified the words *gentleman*, *scholar*, and *scientist*. He was a friend of students, whom he counseled and regularly entertained; of growers, whom he respected and was admired by in turn; and of people throughout the University community. He had such warmth of personality and good humor, such diverse interests and experiences, that people sought his company and simply enjoyed him greatly.

*William F. Rochow, Leon J. Tyler, Roy L. Miller*