IN MEMORIAM

Professor Roelof Prakken

Roelof Prakken was born in the village of Enter on 13 November 1898. After graduating from the Deventer Teachers Training College in 1918, he was a primary school teacher until 1927, first at Enter, then at Culemborg near Utrecht. In this period his interest in biology was evident from a number of articles on plant communities. By following lectures at the University of Utrecht, Prakken, in his spare time, prepared for the "Akte m.o. K IV" (geology and biology), which degree qualifies for teaching in all secondary schools.

In 1927 followed the appointment as teaching assistant in zoology and experimental histology at the Department of Zoology of Utrecht University where, in 1931, Prakken graduated cum laude in botany, zoology and genetics. Afterwards, as scientific assistant to Prof. Dr. J. A. Honing at the Department of Genetics of the Agricultural University at Wageningen, he prepared a thesis "Inheritance of colours and pod characters in Phaseolus vulgaris" and, with Honing as promoter, obtained the Doctor's Degree (cum laude) of Utrecht University.

In 1939, a Rockefeller grant enabled him to join Muntzing at Lund. In the meantime, World War II had led to the occupation of The Netherlands, and Prakken chose to stay in Sweden although expiration of his grant left him financially at the breadline. Later on, in the service of the Dutch government in exile (London), he devoted himself to the analysis of agricultural and agro-economic problems to contribute to the postwar reconstruction of agriculture in The Netherlands. For this work and for his activities for famine relief he was officially honoured. Some of the reports, notably those on different aspects of plant and animal breeding, were published after the war.

After 1945, Prakken returned to Wageningen, where he became botanist at the Department of Genetics, and in 1949 succeeded Honing as Professor Genetics, accepting the chair with the inaugural address "Chromosoomperspectieven."

During Prakken's directorship, the Department staff was gradually extended, and specialized teaching and research in the fields of population and quantitative genetics, cytogenetics, biochemical genetics, mutagenesis and microbial genetics were initiated.

On 1 September 1969, at the age of 70, Prakken retired after 50 years of service, and having published over 60 scientific papers. His farewell address "Fifty years of Genetics" derives its title from the fact that 50 years ago he have his first public lecture on genetics.

Being fit and young at heart, and at last having time for it, he devoted himself to the analysis of the extensive data on seed-coat colour in Phaseolus vulgaris, which had accumulated over the past 20 years. This resulted in three large publications and several smaller ones, the latter in the BIC Newsletter.
It was a great satisfaction to him when in 1977 the Bean Improvement Cooperative honoured him with the Meritorious Service Award "for outstanding research on beans."

On September 20th, 1978, Roelof Prakken suddenly and quietly died at his home, leaving behind his flowering bean plants in the greenhouse of the Department of Genetics.

The born scientist Prakken never had to really retire and never saw his clarity of thinking fade.

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HOMER SWINGLE RETIRES

Dr. Homer D. Swingle retired on January 15, 1979 as Professor of Plant and Soil Science at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. A native of Hixon, Tennessee, Dr. Swingle holds degrees from the University of Tennessee, Ohio State University and Louisiana State University. Dr. Swingle taught vocational agriculture in Rhea County, Tennessee for seven years and served a short period as a special assistant agent in horticulture. After receiving a Masters degree, he joined the Horticulture Department. Dr. Swingle has been leader of the vegetable research project for several years. This project has included considerable research and publications in snap beans. Teaching duties have included vegetable and physiology classes, a major freshman level plant science course, and advising numerous graduate students. Dr. Swingle has been an excellent teacher and researcher. Honors have been numerous. Two of the latest have included outstanding service to the Tennessee Institute of Agriculture and being elected a fellow of the ASHS. Dr. Swingle will be greatly missed at The University of Tennessee.

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DR. KAISER TRANSFERRED

Dr. Walter J. Kaiser, research plant pathologist, USDA, SEA, AR was transferred recently from Kenya, East Africa to Washington State University, Pullman, Washington as plant pathologist on the staff of the USDA Regional Plant Introduction Station. During the four years that Dr. Kaiser was stationed in East Africa, he served as Director of the East African Plant Quarantine Station which is located near Nairobi at Muguga, Kenya. At Pullman, where the USDA Plant Introduction (PI) collection for beans is maintained, Dr. Kaiser will be devoting a major part of his research to disease problems of bean and will be screening the collection for resistance to various important pathogens of this crop.