Merlin W. Allen, 1912–1974

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Dr. Merlin W. Allen was born December 1, 1912, in Wellsville, a small agricultural community near Logan, Utah, and died July

10, 1974, following a short illness, in Woodland, California. He was actively engaged in nematology for more than 35 years and was always striving to further his knowledge of nematodes and to transmit this knowledge to everyone he contacted, both scientists and lay people.

Due to the influence of his father, who was a school teacher, Merlin Allen's formal education began at the age of five when he read the Greek Classics. In 1931, he graduated from Logan High School and entered Utah State University as a major in Entomology. He received the B.S. degree in 1935, and the M.S. in 1937. During that time he was also captain of the Utah State varsity tennis and swimming teams.

From 1937 to 1938, Merlin was employed as a Field Aid by the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine in Logan, Utah. While studying entomology at Utah State and during his employment with the Bureau at Logan, he came under the influence of entomologist, George F. Knowlton. His first scientific illustrations and research papers were published with Dr. Knowlton and dealt mainly with the taxonomy of aphids in Utah.

In April of 1939, the Bureau transferred him to the Salt Lake City office, where he met the individual who influenced his professional career more than any other single person, that grand old master and teacher, Gerald Thorne. Within a year after starting to work under the guidance of Thorne he published his first paper on nematode taxonomy. A short time later, he was promoted to Junior Scientific Aid with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, and then to Junior Nematologist in 1942.

Merlin was promoted to Assistant Nematologist in the Bureau in February of 1943 and transferred to Bakersfield, California. One year later he was hired by the University of California as an Associate in the Experiment Station on the Berkeley campus.

This change in employment launched Merlin fully into his professional career in which he became one of the most respected nematologists in the world. In 1947, he earned the Ph.D. degree in Entomology at the University of California, Berkeley, and was appointed Assistant Professor of Entomology and Assistant Nematologist on that campus. He had the distinction of being the first nematologist in the University of California, and was the first to offer a formal course in plant nematology in the United States. Merlin loved to teach, and during this time he trained many well-known nematologists in his laboratory.

During 1951-52, he was on sabbatical leave from the University as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Wageningen in The Netherlands. Through his knowledge of laboratory techniques and taxonomy of plant-parasitic and free-living nematodes, he helped initiate the large permanent nematode slide collection at Wageningen. For three months in 1957, he was a consultant in Nematology to the Pineapple Research Institute in Hawaii.

He was transferred in July of 1958 to the Davis campus of the University of California as Professor of Nematology. Dr. Allen was Chairman of the statewide Department of Nematology at the University of California from 1962 to 1966, and from 1966 to 1968 was Chairman of the department at Davis. Through his guidance during these 6 years, Nematology continued its growth in the University of California system.

From April, 1968 to March, 1969 he participated in the joint University of Chile–University of California program in Santiago, Chile. In Chile, he worked with the

same enthusiastic drive, training a Chilean staff member, guiding the research work of three graduate students, establishing a Nematology library and permanent slide collection, and demonstrating with field fumigation plots the need for controlling plant-parasitic nematodes. In 1972, he was a member of a U.C.–A.I.D. Central American Survey Team which evaluated pest problems, pesticide use, and educational institutions in six Central American countries.

Dr. Allen was the first president of the Society of Nematologists, and served in this position from 1961 to 1963, the only president elected to serve two terms. From 1966 to 1969 he served as a member of the Advisory Committee of Invertebrate-Helminths, Smithsonian Institution, and from 1967 to 1970 was the Society of Nematologists' representative to the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences. In 1970, he was honored by the Society of Nematologists by being elected to honorary membership in The Society of Nematologists.

Besides belonging to The Society of Nematologists, Merlin was also a member of The American Phytopathological Society, The Helminthological Society of Washington, D.C., and Sigma Xi.

Merlin Allen is most widely known for his taxonomic studies of plant-parasitic and free-living nematodes. His trademarks in taxonomy have always been the very careful study of numerous specimens, accurate and detailed illustrations, and precise descriptions. His revisions of the plant-parasitic genera, *Trichodorus* and *Tylenchorhynchus,* helped establish a basis for other generic taxonomic revisions by nematologists throughout the world.

Dr. Allen primarily was a taxonomist, but to many of his co-workers, especially in California, his outstanding work in pathogenicity, ecology, and control will also stand out as some of his more important contributions. He was a pioneer in nematode control on cotton and other crops by soil fumigation and crop rotation. Merlin also made significant contributions to developing nematode-resistant plants, and was one of the first researchers to critically test the transmission of plant viruses by nematodes. At the University of California he established what has become one of the larger Nematology reprint and reference libraries, and one of the three largest and most complete permanet nematode slide collections in the United States.

Merlin Allen was exceptional in his broad knowledge of the overall field of nematology, but his first love was always his students and teaching. One of his students capably summarized what Merlin was all about when he said, "I'll always think of Dr. Allen as *a students' professor.*" So, perhaps the greatest legacy Merlin W. Allen has left to the science of Nematology is his students, and all of their students, *ad infinitum.*

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. LaVonne Jean (Bonnie) Allen, of Davis, a brother, Ray W. Allen, and two sisters, Mrs. Margaret Chugg and Mrs. Martha Hallows, of Logan, Utah. The Merlin W. Allen Memorial Scholorship Fund was established at Davis for Students in Nematology.

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