Obituary

Forrest Rhinehart Immer
1899-1946

Forrest Rhinehart Immer, associate director of the Minnesota Experiment Station and professor of agronomy and plant genetics at the University of Minnesota, died suddenly on 2 February 1946 as a result of a heart attack.

Dr. Immer was born at Spencer, Iowa, on 18 July 1899. While a small boy, he moved with his family to a farm near Jeffers, Minnesota. After graduation from high school in 1917, he entered the service for a few months during World War I. He then entered the University of Minnesota and received his B.S. degree in 1924, his M.S. degree in 1925, and his Ph.D. in 1927.

Dr. Immer served as instructor of plant genetics in the University of Minnesota from 1927 to 1929 and as assistant plant geneticist during 1929–30. He then became associate geneticist with the Division of Sugar Plant Investigations of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, serving in this capacity from 1930 to 1935, with headquarters in the Division of Agronomy and Plant Genetics of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station. During this same period he acted as adviser in statistics in the Experiment Station. Soon after accepting this position he was appointed a Fellow of the National Research Council for the year 1930–31 and spent this time in England and Sweden, studying statistics at the Rothamsted Experiment Station, England, under the direction of R. A. Fisher, and plant breeding at the Svalöf Plant Breeding Station, Sweden. In 1935 he rejoined the University of Minnesota as associate professor in the Division of Agronomy and Plant Genetics and occupied this position until 1937, when he was made a full professor. In addition to his duties as professor of agronomy and plant genetics, he was appointed vice-director of the Minnesota Experiment Station in 1941 and became associate director in 1942, in which capacity he served until his death.

One of Dr. Immer's major contributions to science was as a joint author with H. K. Hayes of a book entitled *Methods of plant breeding,* published in 1942.

Another of Dr. Immer's chief contributions was through his students. In recent years, with his added administrative duties, he continued to teach a course in Applied Statistics. His enthusiasm in science and especially in genetics and applied statistics, his fund of information in many fields, and his ever-readiness to help his students attracted an increasing number of students to his classes and made him an inspiring teacher.

Dr. Immer was called for special duty in England, in 1944, as operations analyst with the Eighth Air Force. Here he was assigned to the Operations Analysis Section, whose duty it was to analyze bombing operations and improve bombing accuracy. For his exemplary service he received citations from Gen. H. H. Arnold and Lt. Gen. J. H. Doolittle.

Dr. Immer returned to his position at the University of Minnesota in November 1944. In his administrative position he was rapidly gaining recognition and assuming leadership in the solution of agricultural problems and was serving as chairman of the Committee on Farm Structures and on Poultry Breeding set up by the directors of the North Central Regional Experiment Stations. He was also chairman of a committee on legislation relating to farm structures for the Association of Land Grant Colleges. He was very active in the American Society of Agronomy, serving on various committees, and was consulting editor in statistics for the journal at the time of his death.

H. K. Hayes

Division of Agronomy and Plant Genetics
University of Minnesota

Homer Jay Wheeler
1861-1945

Homer Jay Wheeler died on 18 November 1945 in the Mountainside Hospital, Montclair, New Jersey. He was born to Quakers, Jesse B. and Martha (Sykes) Wheeler, in Bolton, Massachusetts, on 2 September 1861.

Upon graduation from Massachusetts Agricultural College in 1883, Wheeler was offered a position as assistant to Dr. Goessmann, who had just been made director of the newly established Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station. He accepted the offer and served the Station for four years, thus gaining the unique distinction of having actually performed the first chemical analytical work done there.

Through the influence of Dr. Goessmann, and the generosity and confidence of a friend who loaned him sufficient funds to make the venture possible, he departed from New York for Germany in the summer of 1887 to study for his Ph.D. degree at the University of Goettingen. During his two years at the University he studied under Profs. Victor Meyer, Tollens, Henneberg, and Von Koenen. While there, together

with a small group of American students, he heard the first lectures ever given on "The Operation of the Respiration Calorimeter" (Dr. Pfeiffer). Upon being awarded the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in 1889 he returned to the United States to assume the duties of chief chemist of the newly established Rhode Island Agricultural Experiment Station at Kingston, Rhode Island. On 15 May 1891 he was married in Brooklyn, New York, to Frieda H. F. Ruprecht of Goettingen, Germany.

It was not long before his work in connection with soil acidity, and particularly in pointing out the occurrence of an injurious degree of acidity even in many well-drained upland soils in this country, began to gain him not only national but also international recognition. Concurrently he worked on the effect of soil acidity in lessening the danger from potato scab, on the fertilizing value of sodium salts for certain crops, especially where there was a deficiency of potash, and on many similar agricultural problems. Not long after his arrival at the Rhode Island Agricultural Experiment Station he was offered the position of professor of geology in the State College, which position he filled concurrently with his Experiment Station work from 1894 to 1912. During the period from 1902 to 1903 he served similarly as professor of agricultural chemistry and from 1902 to 1912 as professor of agronomy. In 1902 he accepted the directorship of the Experiment Station and held this position until 1912, when he resigned to become manager of the Agricultural Service Bureau of the American Agricultural Chemical Company. In the interim he had made a visit to Europe to study work being done there; he had served in 1902 and 1903 as acting president of the Rhode Island State College; he was author and co-author of a great many bulletins and reports issued by the Station; he was author of the book, *Manures and fertilizers* (Macmillan); he had served as president of the Association of Official Agricultural Chemists of the United States, as president of the American Society of Agronomy, and as chairman of the New England Section of the American Chemical Society. In 1912 Brown University conferred upon him the honorary degree of Sc.D.

During his first 16 years with the American Agricultural Chemical Company, Dr. Wheeler was located in Boston. In 1928 he was transferred to the new headquarters in New York City. While manager of the Agricultural Service Bureau, he wrote and had published many bulletins, booklets, and circulars on various agricultural subjects; he conducted experiments with fertilizers in practically all of the eastern states from Maine to Florida, and as far West as the Upper Michigan Peninsula, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. He also conducted experiments with radioactive substances, with manganese, boron, and such other elements as had been claimed or purported to be beneficial to plant growth. During World War I he served as chairman of the Committee on Soils and Fertilizers of the National Research Council.

In 1933 his Alma Mater conferred upon him the honorary degree of Sc.D.

Up to five weeks before his death, Dr. Wheeler maintained a keen and active interest in all fields of chemical development and particularly in the field of agricultural chemistry. His interest in research dated from the time when in Germany he produced the first wood sugar, xylose, from beech wood, and jute.

CARL O. J. WHEELER
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News and Notes

The American Physical Society held its 272nd meeting at the University of Chicago 20–22 June. Two other meetings are scheduled for the summer months, one at the University of California at Berkeley, 12–13 July, and the other in New York City 19–21 September.

Some confusion surrounded the early plans of the meeting because security releases were slow in coming; nevertheless 97 papers were read during the three days in addition to the longer lectures prepared by invitation.

On Thursday morning there were three such lectures scheduled, E. U. Condon, president of the Society, presiding. E. Fermi spoke on "Elementary Pile Theory," R. F. Christy on "The Small Enriched Reactor at Los Alamos," Gregory Breit on "Theory of Nuclear Reactions."

L. A. DuBridge, vice president of the Society and president-elect of the California Institute of Technology, presided in the afternoon session which heard Farrington Daniels on "Problems and Plans of Nucleonics Research," J. R. Dunning on "Neutron Spectroscopy," and H. H. Goldsmith on "A Critical Survey of Neutron Cross Sections."

At the dinner session on Thursday night A. H. Compton spoke on "Physics Research and Release of Nuclear Energy."