



IN MEMORIAM

Ralph Burton March
Professor of Entomology, Emeritus
UC Riverside
1919 - 2007

Ralph March was born August 5, 1919 in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. He married Robinetta Tompkin on December 26, 1942. They had three children.

Ralph came through graduate school in one of the most tumultuous times in the history of the world, much less the United States. He graduated from high school in June 1937 and then after one year at Oshkosh State Teachers College, he entered the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in June 1941. A Phi Beta Kappa Award reminds us that Ralph was one of the bright ones. During one year in graduate school still at Illinois, he majored in entomology and minored in chemistry and plant pathology. In June 1941, Ralph entered the US Army eventually earning the rank of major and was discharged in June of 1946 whereupon he returned to Urbana and completed a master's degree in September 1946 and Ph.D. in June 1948.

This time in Illinois was extremely exciting since Julius Hyman of the Velsicol Oil Company discovered cyclodiene insecticides based on the Diels-Alder reaction working with Clyde Kearns at the Urbana campus. This important hybrid study of entomology and chemistry played a pivotal role in Ralph's training. His military service was as a Chemical Warfare officer, a toxicologist.

The Citrus Experiment Station at Riverside expanded rapidly just after World War II spurred in part by the emergence and application of the new insecticide, DDT (one of the most closely guarded secrets during the war) to general crop protection. Ralph was hired July 1 1948 as a junior entomologist, became assistant in 1951 and then associate entomologist in 1954, and finally entomologist in 1957.

In his book, *Odyssey of an Entomologist*, 1987, Alfred M. Boyce credits Ralph March (page 143) as the insect physiology pillar in the residue analysis and toxicology team completed by his colleagues, Francis A. Gunther and Robert L. Metcalf. This group, later joined by the eminent chemist, T. Roy Fukuto, was responsible for establishing the Entomology Department as a pioneer in all aspects of insecticide development for crop protection.

Ralph pioneered studies on insecticide resistance, cross-resistance, insecticide synergism, and metabolism that became the foundation for modern biochemical pesticide toxicology. Early on Ralph and others realized that pest insects were developing resistance to the new synthetic insecticides almost as fast as they were being introduced. Ralph's "Fly Room" was a main part of the early insect toxicology effort at UC Riverside.

When Riverside was made a liberal arts campus of the University of California in 1954, the Citrus Experiment Station was gradually integrated into the graduate school for teaching and Ralph and others were given academic professorial titles to go with their research titles.

In this exciting academic time, Ralph served as Dean of the Graduate Division in 1961-1969. Then Ralph was asked to head the new Division of Toxicology and Physiology within the Entomology Department

1969-1972. And later Ralph was asked again to lead the department as chair 1978-1983. It was from this post that Ralph retired.

While Ralph performed his administrative duties brilliantly, his research was maintained by Glenn Printy, his trusted Experiment Station technician of many years. Glenn's widow, Wilma remains a member of the University Club at UCR and serves regularly as docent at the Riverside Municipal Museum.

If you run into Wilma, you can detect the spark that drove what Tom Brokaw called the Greatest Generation. This cohort of researchers introduced a new field, made outstanding contributions to pesticide science and agriculture in the process and put Riverside on the map.

For those of us who were fortunate enough to have been taught by Ralph or called him colleague; we can relate that his favorite expression was "... in relation to" Ralph was always comparing things. His lectures were rich with data and rigor. He had a stoic nature that was in stark contrast to fun-loving Robin, his wife of many years who made a lasting impression on the early campus.

The March's retired to Santa Rosa near their beloved San Francisco where they were married during The War. Tragically, Robin passed away unexpectedly after only a few years there. Ralph eventually moved to North Carolina, closer to his children and grandchildren. He occasionally emailed from there to "check in."

Ralph is survived by his 6 Ph.D. graduates and many dozens he mentored in graduate school. We have a picture of a retired Ralph taken in Patagonia during a world trip. He is smiling. We also are smiling on the inside with nostalgia snug in the new Entomology building as the campus prepares to demolish the old Entomology Building representing the field that Ralph and his colleagues made so famous all over the world.

Robert I. Krieger
Michael K. Rust
Thomas A. Miller

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