



IN MEMORIAM

Parker F. Pratt
Professor of Soil Science, Emeritus
UC Riverside
1918 - 2008

Parker F. Pratt, an internationally recognized professor of soil science at the University of California, Riverside and director of the USDA Salinity Laboratory at Riverside died June 23, 2008 at his home in Riverside at the age of 89. Born November 21, 1918 in Virden, New Mexico, he grew up in Colonia Dublan, Mexico and graduated from the Juarez State Academy. His academic career began after a World War II tour of duty in the U.S. Navy as a radio and radar technician. Dr. Pratt obtained B.S. and M.S. degrees in agronomy and soil science at Utah State University, and a Ph.D. degree in agronomy from Iowa State University.

Dr. Pratt joined the UCR faculty in 1955, after teaching and researching as an assistant professor of soil science at Ohio State University. His research focused on the applied chemistry of phosphorus and potassium, the leaching of nitrate into groundwater, and the use of organic wastes on cropland. His work on chemical reactions of phosphorus and potassium resulted in identification of soils potentially deficient in these two nutrients for plant growth and fertilization strategies. Through NSF support in the 1970s, he led a team of UC researchers at Berkeley, Davis, and Riverside campuses on the first large scale field investigation on nitrogen fertilizer management as it related to crop production and nitrate pollution of California's groundwater resources. Under a Ford Foundation- sponsored program with the University of California and the University of Chile, Dr. Pratt met Professor Eduardo Schalcha B. of the University of Chile in the early 1970s and they studied the chemistry of volcanic ash derived soils in Chile that lead to exchanges of faculty visits, training of graduate students, and joint research projects and technical papers. This collaboration trained the first generation of soil chemists in Chile and essentially launched the soil chemistry research in Chile. Long after both had retired, the collaborative research have continued with other faculty members and extended to significantly broader topics.

Dr. Pratt mentored many graduate students from home and abroad, including Kenya, Chile, Brazil, Peru, Columbia, Mexico, India, and Pakistan. He was a productive researcher, having authored, or co- authored more than 200 scientific papers, review articles, technical reports, books, and chapters of scientific books.

Dr. Pratt served as chairman of the Department of Soil and Environmental Sciences for 15 years. Owing to his leadership in hiring new faculty and seeking extramural grants, the department achieved an international reputation for its research in soil and environmental issues. He was also an active participant in numerous campus and system wide University of California committees. He served on the UCR Academic Senate Budget Committee including being Chair one year. After retiring from UCR in 1986, Dr. Pratt was tapped to be director of the USDA Salinity Laboratory for 3 years, during which time he orchestrated the relocation of the laboratory to the UCR campus.

Dr. Pratt was a very active participant and leader in professional societies. He was elected president of the Western Soil Science Society (1969), president of the California Chapter of the American Society of Agronomy (1975) and president of the Soil Science Society of America (1978). These societies also bestowed many honors to Dr. Pratt. These included being elected as Fellow in both the Soil Science Society of America

and the American Society of Agronomy. He was honored with the Agronomic Service Award from the American Society of Agronomy (1975), the Bouyoucos Soil Science Distinguished Career Award (1990), and Honoree of the California Chapter of the American Society of Agronomy (1990). The Chilean Academy of Science recognized him as an Associate member in 1980.

Dr. Pratt served on numerous California State and Federal Agency committees as well as for the National Academy of Science. He was particularly active in International activities with projects or speaking assignments in Australia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, and The United Arab Emirates.

Dr. Pratt's life was one of service to family, church, community and his profession. During his retirement, he served as President of the LIFE Society of the UCR Extension. He was a member of the University Heights Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Dr. Pratt is survived by his wife of 63 years, Mary; children Von, Craig, Koleen Shaw, and Kathleen Hyde; 19 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

J. Letey, Chair
A.L. Page
A.C- S Chang