

In memoriam – Herman J. Phaff

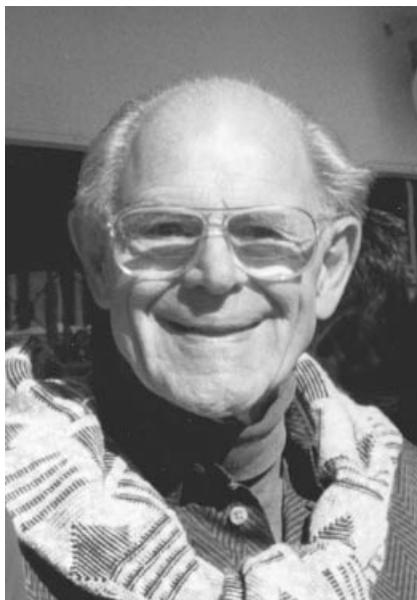
HERMAN JAN PHAFF was an Associate Editor of the *International Journal of Systematic Bacteriology* for over 20 years. He died 24 August 2001 from the complications of a fall, while vacationing with his wife in the Caribbean.

Herman was Professor Emeritus at the University of California at Davis. He served the University for 40 years before his official retirement in 1983. For the past 18 years he continued to work and be a productive scientist in his field.

Herman was born in Winschoten, The Netherlands, where the family operated a winery, which influenced the direction of his education. He studied chemical engineering at the Technical University in Delft, writing a thesis on 'The elaboration of extracellular pectin-hydrolyzing enzymes by fungi'. He was persuaded by his professor, A. J. Kluyver, to continue his studies at the University of California at Berkeley. There, he first worked with Emil Mraek (who later became chancellor of UC Davis) and then with Maynard Joslyn.

H. A. Barker directed Herman's PhD studies, which concentrated on the 'Elaboration of pectic enzymes in *Penicillium chrysogenum*'. After completing his PhD (1943), he accepted a position in the Department of Food Science, which eventually moved to the Davis campus. He and his students continued to study pectic enzymes, but also developed an interest for enzymes that hydrolyse the yeast cell wall and for the composition of the yeast cell wall. His interest gradually shifted more and more towards the yeasts themselves and their natural habitats. He enjoyed collecting and identifying yeasts, and over the years his research resulted in the discovery of many new habitats and their yeast community. One result was the development of the world's largest collection of yeasts from natural habitats. He, along with his students and colleagues, described over 60 new yeast taxa. In the mid-1960s, his laboratory pioneered the use of molecular approaches in yeast systematics. One major result was a notable improvement in criteria for the natural delineation of species.

Many honours and awards were bestowed upon Herman. He received the UC Davis Faculty Research Award in 1969, at which occasion he presented a lecture on the 'Changing Aspects of Yeast Systematics'. He was the Annual Lecturer for the American Society of Enologists (1973) and for the Mycological Society of America (1976). He was presented with the J. Roger Porter Award from the American Society for Microbiology (1984) and the James F. Guymon Award of the American Society for Enology and Viticulture (1986). Recently, he was selected to receive the UCD College of Agricultural and Environmental



**Herman J. Phaff
1913–2001**

Sciences Award of Distinction for 2001. Notification of this award arrived on Monday, 27 August, only a few days after his death.

Herman loved research, but equally enjoyed teaching, his national and international activities, and his interactions with his students, visiting scientists and colleagues. From 1953 to 1988, he served as Editor of the *Yeast Newsletter*, a valuable source of information for scientists working with yeasts. He also served on the Editorial Boards of the *Journal of Bacteriology* (1963–1973), the *Canadian Journal of Microbiology* (1984–1989) and *Yeast* (1987–1992), in addition to the *International Journal of Systematic Bacteriology* (1973–1995). In 1980, Herman's former students and postdocs honoured him on his retirement from UCD with a special seminar at the Vth International Symposium on Yeasts/VIth International Fermentation Symposium in London, Ontario, Canada, and in 1995 a special issue (volume 14) of the *Journal of Industrial Microbiology* was dedicated to him by

his students, postdocs and close colleagues in celebration of his 50 years of active research in yeast biology. As stated in this journal, 'Many of us owe the success of our careers to his scholarship, teaching, professionalism, and, above all his deep friendship.' In 1996, the UC Davis Department of Food Science and Technology and the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences held a symposium in honour of Herman and the 'Herman J. Phaff Culture Collection of Yeast and Yeast-like Microorganisms of the University of California' was officially dedicated.

Besides his research Herman's interest spanned from the arts, to his adored terriers, to the great outdoors. He was chairman of the UC Davis Committee for Arts and Lectures in 1960 and was made an honorary member of the Music Department. He shared his love of the arts with his wife, Diane, who is an accomplished pianist and piano teacher, and with Marinka, his former wife, who died in 1985, who was an avid supporter of the Davis arts community. Herman enjoyed playing the cello in chamber groups as well as fishing and hiking. He built a log cabin in the woods at Silver Lake, a peaceful retreat in northern California.

A memorial service was held on 29 October on the Davis campus to celebrate the life of this gifted scientist and friend. Herman Phaff was truly a special person to many of us.

Sally A. Meyer