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MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

PAUL WEATHERWAX

(April 4, 1888--October 18, 1976)

Paul Weatherwax was born near Worthington, Indiana, on April 4, 1888. He grew up on a farm and received his early education in one-room schoolhouses. Following graduation from high school at Worthington in 1907, he returned to one-room schoolhouses near Worthington to teach for two years. His first college courses were taken at Wabash College in the spring term of 1909 and at DePauw University in the 1910 summer session. During the years 1910 and 1911 he taught high school, first at Owensburg and then at Freedom where he served as principal as well as teacher of most of the courses. Freedom, he has written, was a good name for the town but License would have been better, for he had difficulty in stimulating any interest in orderly behavior or things intellectual. He enrolled at Indiana University in the spring of 1911, but he had to return to teaching at Greencastle for a year in order to secure funds to continue his education at the university. He received the bachelor's degree in 1914, the master's in 1915, and the doctorate in 1918. In the summer of 1913 he was part of a party employed by the Indiana State Board of Health to survey pollution in Indiana streams, and thus he early became aware of problems that only more recently have become of general concern to the ecologist. From 1913 to 1915 he served as an assistant in botany at Indiana University, and in 1915 he became an instructor in botany serving in that position until 1918. Prospects for continuing at Indiana University were not bright at that time so in 1919 he accepted a position as Associate Professor at the University of Georgia. In 1921 he eagerly accepted the invitation to return to Indiana University, and he was to spend the next 37 years teaching for that university. In 1957 he joined the group from Indiana University in the United States Operations Mission in Thailand where he was primarily concerned with training teachers of biology. Although he was made Emeritus Professor in 1959, this did not bring an end to his teaching, for in 1960 he was invited to serve as a visiting professor at Franklin College where he taught for three years. In 1963 Franklin College awarded him an honorary doctorate of science. His last formal teaching was at Hanover College in 1966; but in the remaining days of his life, his office at Indiana University was always open to students who wished to consult with him.

Dr. Weatherwax's teaching career spanned 50 years, and he will be remembered foremost as a teacher, as he would want to be. He received his greatest pleasure from teaching the elementary botany course; and at a time when many professors felt that the elementary courses should be relegated to the junior faculty members, by choice he continued teaching this course until his retirement. He took delight in having children of his former students enroll in his course, as frequently happened. His interest in teaching of elementary students led to the writing of a textbook, Plant Biology, the title of which was changed to Botany in the third edition, the one that he had preferred all along. He also taught his share of advanced courses. One of the most popular of these was a seminar in the morphology of grasses, given at the request of graduate students. His intimate knowledge of the grass family combined with his teaching ability made it possible to make this most difficult family intelligible. Perhaps the course most fondly remembered by his students was the summer field trips to Florida, a course which he introduced to acquaint them with tropical botany.

As great as was his dedication to teaching, he never neglected research. Beginning his research as an undergraduate, he continued with it until long after his formal retirement. His first scientific papers were published in 1914. Dr. Weatherwax was a most versatile botanist, but for his field of specialization he chose morphology, particularly the morphology of grasses, and no grass was to be of greater concern to him than was the corn plant. His doctoral dissertation was entitled The Evolution of Maize, and in 1923 his first book, The Story of the Maize Plant, appeared.

As others have pointed out, it was his early interpretation of the structure of the corn plant in relation to other grasses that was to set the stage for the understanding of the origin of the corn plant. He was concerned not only with the morphology of the plant but with many other aspects as well, particularly its origin and history, which culminated in his Indian Corn in Old America published in 1954. His travels in connection with his research took him to the southeastern and southwestern United States and to many parts of Latin America. His studies were aided by a Waterman fellowship from 1925 to 1930 and a Guggenheim traveling fellowship in 1944. He was also a noted botanical illustrator, and he became widely recognized for the illustrations he made for C.C. Deam's Grasses of Indiana in 1929.

Dr. Weatherwax was a member of a number of societies, and he was particularly active in the affairs of the Botanical Society of America and the Indiana Academy of Science. He served as president of the latter society in 1941. He was secretary of the Botanical Society from 1939 to 1943 and was elected vice president both in 1944 and 1957. In 1976, he received a Certificate of Merit from the society in recognition of his distinguished achievement and contributions to the advancement of botanical science.

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His service to the university is well know. Over the years he served, often as chairman, on a great number of committees. Prominent among these were those concerned with the formation of the Junior Division, the implementation of the recommendations of the self-survey committee, the reorganization of the Graduate School and the Arts College, the formulation of the faculty constitution and the founding of the Faculty Council, recommendations for faculty promotions and honorary degrees, and the naming of buildings. He also served as a member of both the Graduate Council and the Faculty Council, including one year as Secretary of the latter. More recently he will be remembered for his The Woodland Campus of Indiana University (1966) which has served as a guide to the trees on campus to faculty, students, and visitors alike. It seems only fitting then that a new tree was planted on campus near the old biology hall, now Swain East, in his honor on Arbor Day, 1974. The stone beside it reads, "Paul Weatherwax, Distinguished I.U. Botanist." Paul Weatherwax died on October 18, 1976 in Bloomington.

--Charles B. Heiser, Jr.