

Francis Alan Gunther, 1918–1985



Department of Entomology
University of California, Riverside

The passing of Dr. Francis A. Gunther on September 14, 1985, brought to a close one of the world's most distinguished careers in pesticide chemistry and environmental preservation. With professional service that began as a laboratory assistant in 1941 on the Citrus Experiment Station in Riverside, California, later to become the University of California at Riverside, he rose to Professor of Entomology and Chemist in 1956. In 1974 he was appointed Chairman of the Department of Entomology, and served in that position until 1978, when he returned to his first love, the laboratory bench.

For 43 years he devoted his research to investigating the nature, magnitude, locale, and fate of pesticide residues in plant and animal tissues, soils, water, and air. Resulting from his intense interest in protecting man and the environment from untoward effects of pesticides, he coauthored three books and 304 scientific papers. His first book, written with the late Roger C. Blinn, served as the standard reference for insecticide analysis more than a decade.

In 1952 he initiated the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry of the American Chemical Society. In 1962 he founded Residue Reviews and remained its Editor

through 97 volumes. In 1966 he pioneered the Bulletin of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology, and also the Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology in 1973.

Born July 2, 1918, in Los Angeles, he received his A.B. in Physiological Chemistry from the University of Colorado in 1939, his M.S. in Organic Chemistry from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1941, and the Ph.D. in Chemistry of Natural Products in 1947, also from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Among his many awards for scientific excellence were the Wiley Award presented by the Association of Official Analytical Chemists in 1959, the Citrograph Research Award in 1968, and the Burdick and Jackson International Award in Pesticide Chemistry in 1977 from the American Chemical Society.

He served as a consultant to the Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, the Ford Foundation, Stanford Research Institute, and 15 various agricultural chemical manufacturers. Additionally, he served as advisor to the National Academy of Sciences, National Science Foundation, Republic of South Africa Department of Agriculture, Atomic Energy Agency of Cyprus, Department of Agriculture of Cyprus, the citrus industry and many other commodity organizations.

Internationally acclaimed, Francis Gunther was an institution for many years, and the impact of his work has influenced the modeling of pesticide legislation and regulations more than any other scientist. He assisted in planning the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and helped several countries in writing environmental law. His mark made on society is even more poignant in this era of deep concern over toxic waste and chemical residues in the environment. Through his intensive field and laboratory investigations he laid the groundwork for much of today's progress in preserving our delicate environment.

His creative approach to microchemistry identified him early in his professional life as an innovator and pioneer in the study of pesticide residues. One product of his fertile mind was the first fully automated system for detecting and measuring pesticide residues in foods and other substrates. He also helped design the first miniature chemical laboratory that could be carried into the field for on-the-spot residue measurements.

In addition to his extraordinary contributions to pesticide chemistry, Dr. Gunther taught a graduate course in pesticide chemistry for 22 years and subsequently trained 87 postdoctoral research fellows from 26 countries.

Francis married Jane Davies in 1942, who survives him with his four sons, Dr. Francis L., Theodore N., Robert R., and Kurt D., and one daughter, Nancy Gunther Beck. Jane Gunther continues to serve as Assistant Editor of Residue Reviews, a position she has held since its conception.

The world will continue to be the beneficiary of this unique scientist's monumental research and encyclopedic documentation of pesticide literature. The legacy of this prominent chemist will advance man's knowledge for generations.

We owe a great debt of appreciation and pay tribute to Francis Alan Gunther.