

Dewey John Raski (1917-2014)



Dewey John Raski died peacefully at his home in Davis, CA, USA on 21 January 2014 at the age of 96. Dewey was born on 12 December 1917 in Kenilworth, UT, USA; his family moved to Los Angeles when he was 3 years old. He attended public schools in the Los Angeles area where, besides his academic achievements, he excelled in football and wrestling.

In 1937, Dewey was admitted to the University of California at Berkeley. He completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Entomology in 1941. He continued to excel at wrestling as an undergraduate and even tried out for the United States Olympic team. After graduation, he started working on a Master's degree but, when Pearl Harbour was attacked, he suspended his academic pursuits and enlisted in the Army Air Force. He earned his wings as a fighter pilot in the P-51 Mustang and spent the majority of the war as a flight instructor in Texas. While on leave from the Air Force in 1943, Dewey met and married Evelyn; they shared 70 years together.

After the war, Dewey returned to UC Berkeley and earned his Ph.D. in Entomology in 1948. His Ph.D. project was initially on insect pests of pome fruits, but during his studies he became acquainted with Professor Merlin Allen and changed direction to work on nematode problems. His thesis was on the morphology and biology of *Heterodera schachtii*, a serious pest of sugar beet in

California. Dr Raski lectured at Berkeley as an instructor and junior nematologist for 6 years before transferring to UC Davis in 1954 to establish teaching and research programmes in the newly-created Department of Plant Nematology. At UC Davis he taught general plant nematology, principles and techniques of nematode taxonomy and morphology, and nematode taxonomy and comparative morphology. Between 1954 and 1969, nematology research and extension in the University of California were consolidated into a single state-wide department that included the Riverside, Berkeley and Davis campuses. Dr Raski chaired that department between 1959 and 1964 and was instrumental in determining the direction of research activities in the state and in recruiting and hiring a cadre of nematologists who became very prominent in the discipline. He chaired the reinstated Department of Nematology at UC Davis between 1969 and 1973.

Dr Raski was world-renowned for his contributions to nematode taxonomy and for his work on nematode control in vineyards. His participation in the discovery of the role of *Xiphinema index* as the vector of grapevine fan-leaf virus directed new research initiatives in the importance and management of that nematode. The discovery stimulated world-wide activity in the study of nematode vectors of plant viruses. His taxonomic work on plant-parasitic nematodes utilised light and scanning electron microscopy, the only available tools at the time. With those tools he made substantial contributions to the taxonomy and relationships in two very challenging groups, the family Criconematidae and the genus *Paratylenchus*. He recounted experiences of collection expeditions throughout the length of South America in cataloguing the diversity of those groups.

Besides his teaching and research activities in California, Dr Raski developed a deep interest in the people and agriculture of India where he was instrumental in the development of the Division of Nematology at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute. Throughout his career at UC Davis, Dr Raski hosted many visiting scientists from India as well as from other countries. He mentored a number of students who have become prominent researchers and teachers in nematology and related disciplines. In recognition of his contributions to the development of nematology as a discipline in India, the Indian Society of Nematologists established the Professor

D.J. Raski Academic Merit Award for outstanding nematological research by young scholars.

Dr Raski was a charter member of the Society of Nematologists in 1961. He was honoured by the Society by election to Fellow in 1981 and to Honorary Member in 1988. He retired from the UC Davis Department of Nematology in 1987. An international symposium was held at his retirement in honour of his career and his contributions to both the discipline and to agriculture. Leading scientists in the fields of taxonomy and nematode-transmission of plant viruses travelled to Davis to present their research and to explain the influence that Dr Raski had on their careers. In 1998, Dr Raski received the prestigious Award of Distinction of the UC Davis College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. In December 2012, his many colleagues, friends and family from near and far came to wish him a happy 95th birthday; he thoroughly enjoyed the celebration.

Dr Raski is survived by Evelyn, three children, 11 grandchildren, and six great grandchildren. Among the tributes and condolences typifying the reaction of colleagues around the world were the following: "Dr Raski provided an example of dedication and honesty; he was one of the best systematists and taxonomists in nematology; I have excellent memories of him" and "The passing of this giant from among us is a very sad day, but we shall remember him. Not only as the doyen of virus transmission but as the man himself; we remember his gentle but firm persona and ready humor. What a guy, what a life!"

Howard FERRIS* and Harry K. KAYA
*Department of Entomology and Nematology,
University of California
Davis, CA 95616, USA*

*Corresponding author, e-mail: hferris@ucdavis.edu