

A Brief Note on Dr. Francis E. Clark

February 26, 2004

NREL is proud today to honor Dr. Francis Clark, truly the “Dean” of soil microbiologists and soil ecologists worldwide, and a great benefactor to the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory and the College of Natural Resources.



Francis E. Clark

Dr. Clark was born on March 4, 1910. He received his PhD from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1936. He has made major contributions to the field of soil microbiology, particularly with respect to the cycling of nutrients in terrestrial ecosystems and to understanding soil, plant, and microbial interactions. His long and distinguished career includes work with USDA's Agricultural Research Service and faculty affiliations at Colorado State University, Kansas State University, and Iowa State University. He has completed foreign assignments with the UN and NATO, and in 1971 spent a full month in Bulgaria as a senior USDA/ARS Scientist advising the Bulgarian government on soil microbial ecology. He has mentored and advised a number of graduate students, and was a key adviser to George Van Dyne, an early catalyst to the formation of NREL, in the early IBP Grassland Biome days during 1970-74. He played a strong role in international synthesis with IBP in those challenging years.

Dr. Clark is the author of several books, including Soil Microbiology and Biochemistry with Eldor Paul, and more than 175 journal articles. In addition to his scientific publications, Dr. Clark has written two books and several manuscripts on the history of Larimer County, Colorado. His many awards and honors include the ARS Hall of Fame Award in 1988, the Soil Science Society Distinguished Career Award in 1990, and the CU Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1992.

Dr. Clark has been the most generous, consistent, and important individual donor to NREL programs in the Department's history. For example, in 1997 Dr. Clark established the Francis Clark Soil Biology Scholarship Fund at NREL. This endowment has provided financial support to thirteen outstanding graduate students since its inception. Currently, Dr. Clark is playing a key role in funding a new endowment at NREL which will support deserving scientists in pursuit of the overall goal of excellence in ecological research.