

A Tribute to Raymond J. Tarleton, AACCI and APS Executive Vice President Emeritus

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Ray's Mentee



Raymond J. Tarleton was the right person, at the right time, with the right skills to guide AACCI International (AACCI) and The American Phytopathological Society (APS) through a period of amazing advancements. What started with happenstance, culminated in a long and storied career. When volunteer officers of the two small scientific organizations realized they needed

a minimal workforce to accomplish the work of their organizations, they found a graduate student who was completing studies in both science and journalism. Over the next 40 years Ray demonstrated organizational and leadership skills that made the partnership between AACCI and APS a success and provided their members with a vast array of services.

Raymond J. Tarleton passed away in late October 2017 in his favorite locale, Tucson, AZ, after 26 years of retirement from AACCI and APS. Ray's career was devoted to these organizations, and while much of their history has been well documented, most are unaware of Ray's tremendous influence on their success.

First Full-Time Employee

As AACCI Annual Meetings grew bigger and more complex and its publications increased in size, the motivation to hire a staff grew. The AACCI journal *Cereal Chemistry* and a cardboard box of records were located at the University of Minnesota when the volunteer journal editor started paying Ray for part-time technical editing. Ray was hired as the first full-time employee of AACCI in 1950. He continued with his classes and finished his master's degree in 1952. In 1967 APS volunteers had reached a point where they also needed help, and they heard about Ray's work for AACCI. Following much discussion, an agreement was reached to create a joint headquarters operation.

The plan was unique—to form a nonprofit cooperative owned jointly by AACCI and APS. While most small scientific organizations were managed by for-profit companies and their journals were published by commercial publishers, AACCI and APS, through their nonprofit cooperative, could manage themselves. Determining how to serve two organizations with very different mixes of members was a challenge: the vast majority of AACCI members were employed in industry, and most APS members were employed in academia. Both groups needed very similar services, however, and Ray's ability to help them leverage their unique characteristics made the partnership successful.

Innovating with Technology

Starting with membership databases and production of their journals, Ray set out to use new technologies to improve the quality of member services and create efficiencies that would save money that could be used to initiate new services. As part of his journalism class, Ray designed a new publication for AACCI, *Cereal Science Today* (now *Cereal Foods World*). Part journal and part magazine, it became a very popular member publication.

Publishing and printing went through many changes over the course of Ray's career. When the AACCI and APS partnership was just getting started, printing was primarily done via hot-metal type and letterpress printing. The process was labor-intensive and commonly performed by printing companies. Thus, most of the journals produced by scientific organizations were published by large for-profit publishing companies. The ability to self-publish afforded AACCI and APS the opportunity to sell subscriptions at lower prices and pass on any surplus to their members.

In 1969 Ray brought "strike-on" typesetting to headquarters, allowing AACCI and APS to manage production in-house. The new technologies kept coming, and Ray took advantage as the return on investment allowed. Ray was also an early adopter of computers. The first computer filled an entire office and provided the ability to organize the membership database in new ways and helped with financial recordkeeping. This eventually allowed the office to keep pace with the sale of thousands of books and other products. Technological advancements in printing and publishing continue to this day, with production of digital publications.

Strength of Partnership

The success of the AACCI and APS partnership has brought benefits to all. The organizations were able to remain independent and financially sound, and members were provided a vast array of services that they would not have had access to otherwise.

Ray made great efforts to remain close to the members, understanding that any new service or product had to have a high value to justify its adoption. He recognized early on that if this nonprofit structure was going to be successful, it was essential that the relationship between the members and staff be collaborative. It would need volunteer members who cared about their organization and would provide leadership and scientific expertise. It also required staff with the ability to support and work with members. Only when this relationship works well is there the innovation and spark needed to make it happen.

APS Past President R. James Cook stated it well, "Combine the energy, innovative ideas, and time commitments of the members with the hard work and dedication of the highly qualified paid professional staff and we have an explanation for past accomplishments and a recipe for continued success."

Ray was adept at welcoming new board members, providing training and financial background, and focusing on the strategic direction of each organization. He ensured that volunteers concentrated on the big issues rather than the details of daily operations. He always took great care to help them be successful in their roles.

In a letter to Ray on his birthday, AACCI Past President William Atwell said, "Thank you for welcoming me to the AACCI Board of Directors years ago when I was fairly junior in the industry and certainly not familiar with the processes, activities, or responsibilities of any board of directors. I suspect I was a little unrefined with respect to your other board members, and I also suspect it may have taken an extra dose of your gentle mentoring to get me where I needed to be. I look back at my time on the

board as a major growth experience for me. I remember you telling me that it was your job to make me look good. That must have been quite a task!”

Ray also recognized and valued diverse thinking. APS Past President Anne Vidaver wrote, “Ray was the man in charge at APS headquarters when I became part of APS’s administration, from secretary and board member ultimately to president, becoming the second woman president and the first married one. Ray was extremely helpful and highly professional in all his dealings with me and set the tone for other men at the table—some of whom were highly skeptical of me. Ray was there at one of the most crucial points of my personal life as well, for it was the year before my presidency that my husband was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Ray offered help and sent flowers at the time of George’s death. At the following APS national meeting, he was by my side at the time of the presidential address, ready for anything.”

In the late 1960s the volunteer leadership and Ray decided APS and AACCI should build their own office building to house the growing operations. Many members and companies contributed to the cause, and a headquarters building was constructed in a suburb of St. Paul. A substantial addition was later built. The building has served the organizations well, but as technology brings greater efficiencies and changes in the work environment, a different type of building will soon house APS and AACCI headquarters.

Growth of Services

Over Ray’s tenure, the list of member services and products he impacted was substantial. The business model utilized by AACCI and APS was different from that of many organizations. Dues

played a minor role in their financial health, and instead a robust list of products and services was the lifeblood of the organizations.

Ed Kendrick recalled that in working with Ray he gained an appreciation for and better understanding of the business operations of a scientific association: “When I became treasurer of APS that was the beginning of my close association and a wonderful friendship with Ray Tarleton. Working with Ray while I was treasurer, I gained an appreciation and better understanding of the business operations of a scientific society. When Ray retired, I believe I had a strong influence on convincing him and Andy that Tucson, AZ, was a great place to retire. Under Ray’s executive leadership, the course was set for the strong position that APS enjoys today among scientific societies.”

Some of the services established or expanded during Ray’s tenure include AACCI Local Sections and APS Divisions; AACCI and APS Foundations, awards programs, student scholarships, websites, short courses, specific topic meetings, books, government relations, and annual meetings; and the AACCI Check Sample Program.

Jon Faubion, who has the unique perspective of having worked with Ray as an AACCI member and then serving as AACCI’s technical staff expert, remembers Ray warmly: “He was a true force of nature and a role model. I owe him a great deal, for his friendship was an accolade and a passport. May he be long remembered.”

Ray’s impact on AACCI and APS was broad and deep. His ability to work with volunteer leaders, to listen to members, and to hire, train, and challenge staff to make it all happen is a testament to his talents. Nice job, Raymond J. Tarleton!



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