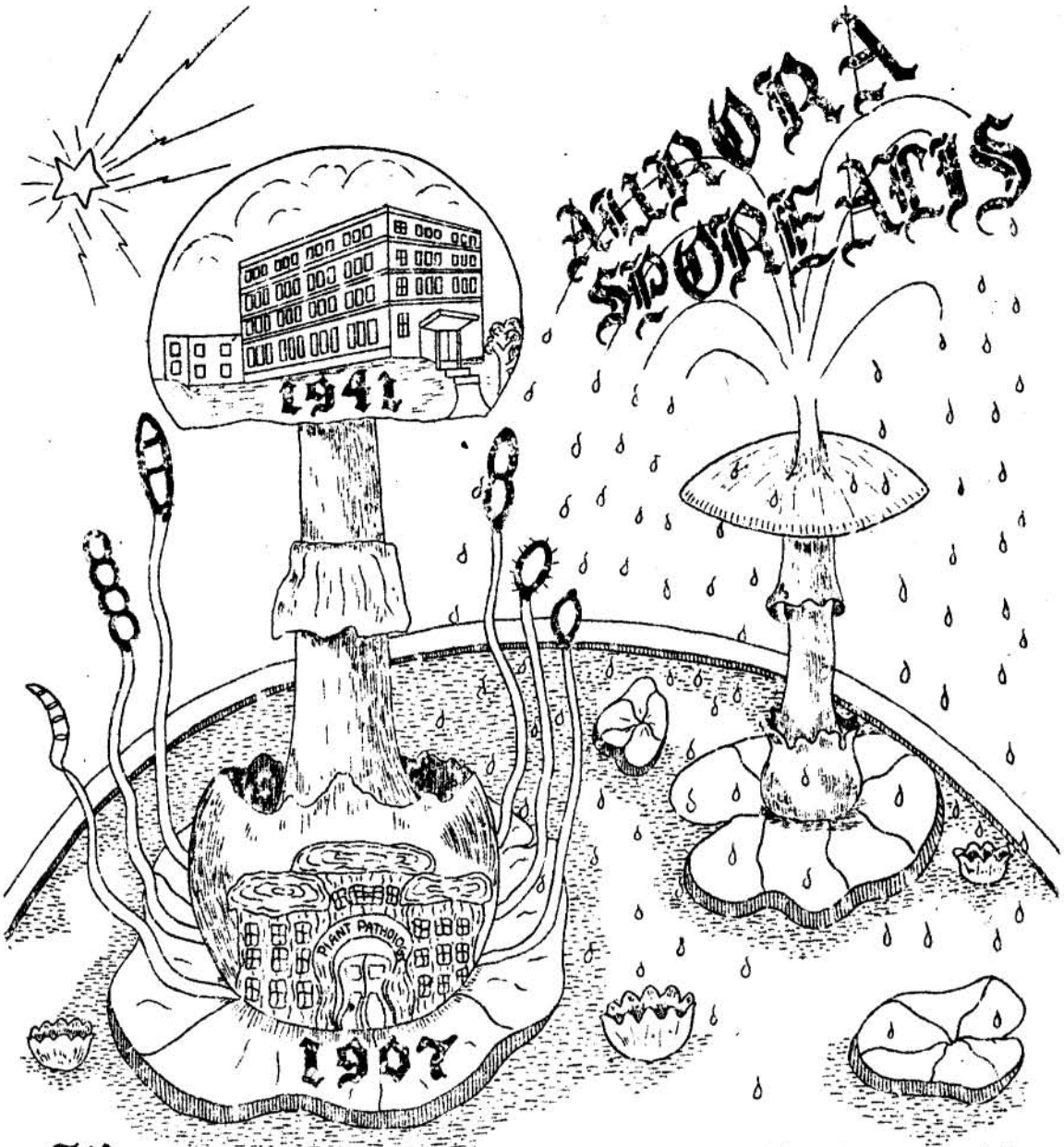

Wherein are recorded the recollections, the ruminations and the vaspirations of those who have drunk from the foaming fount of the Department of Plant Pathology of the University of Minnesota and who now spout forth in divers ways

Let the fount foam and never run dry
Let the spout squirt and never lose power

A u R o R a S p O r E a L i S

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Buller Memorial Seminar

The Seminar on Thursday evening, July 6, was devoted to a discussion of the life and works of Dr. A. H. Reginald Buller. Only a few hours before, many of the seminar members had attended funeral services for Dr. Buller held in Lakewood Chapel, Minneapolis. He died in Winnipeg on July 3. Many of the Old Timers knew Dr. Buller well. Few of them, perhaps, who had not worked directly with him, knew him better than Dr. Stakman. The Chief summarized for us the scientific education of Dr. Buller - how he flunked his first college entrance exam., and was forever proud of it, his work with Dr. Pfeffer, and later with Dr. Robert Hartig at München, and what Dr. Buller got from these early giants that later was to help make him a giant in his own right.

From Hartig Dr. Buller got not only a part of his genius for directness, simplicity, detail and follow-through in his scientific work, but also a silver combination cigar cutter-puncher-and hollow-outer of which only he knew the secret, since even Dr. Stakman, for all his mechanical bent, admitted that he never could work it. Also Dr. Buller was proud of his ability at billiards, and once rapped Dr. Bisby's knuckles with the cue because Bisby did not take his hand off the table quickly enough. (We sort of suspect it was Stak's knuckles that got rapped, but then it was Stak's story.) Also Dr. Buller was one of those to whom the experiment then in progress was the most important thing in life, and nothing was allowed to interrupt it, which perhaps helps to explain at least one part of his genius. When he wanted to find out just how spores were shot off from sterigmata, he figured out how to do it, then stayed there and watched the spores being shot off, if it took all night, or several nights. He recorded in detail what he had seen, thought it over, figured out how he wanted to write it, and then wrote it that way, simply, directly, lucidly. It sounds easy. For Dr. Buller it may have been.

Chris discussed Dr. Buller's 6 volumes on Researches on Fungi. To many of us now here and to many of you Old Timers these books are a mine of information, and a continual source of pleasure and inspiration, and sometimes even of entertainment. No student of plant pathology or mycology can realize how much there is of heaven and earth in the toadstools and lowly molds until he has read and reread and thought about the material presented in these books--as Chris pointed out.

The discussion led again to some of Dr. Buller's salient characteristics -- his infinite capacity for detail, where this meant a closer approach to perfection, his untiring checking and rechecking of phenomena and statement, his constant looking for the significant meanings beyond the observed fact, his rigid insistence upon factual, experimental proof both from himself and from others.

Dr. Hart discussed his Essays on Wheat, a book whcih came almost as a surprise to some of the members, who had known Dr. Buller almost only as a mycologist. These Essays were written 25 years ago, principally to bring out the vital role of wheat in Canadian and United States agriculture and to emphasize the part played by scientists, even pure scientists, in the development of superior varieties. It was, and is, perhaps the best story of wheat ever written for and in this continent. It is one more tribute to Dr. Buller's immense breadth of interest, his capacity for accurate detail, his ability to grasp the general significance of things and to present his conclusions with convincing clarity and with a human interest twist.

Also reviewed were Dr. Buller's papers on forest pathology, his memorable paper on the Fungus Lore of the Greeks and Romans, which he gleaned from ancient books,

and his descriptions of Micheli's experiments, which proved for the first time that fungi were living, growing plants. One of Dr. Buller's articles of faith was that no man was well grounded in his science until he was familiar with the detail and the significance of the work done by those before him, an article of faith which he obviously followed.

There was no feeling at this seminar that we were doing honor to Dr. Buller, but rather that we were trying to grasp and bring out some of the characteristics of a man who had for many years of his three score and ten been in a very real sense a guiding force in the development of mycology, plant pathology, and in the larger field of biology, who had searched out many of the small but significant secrets of nature, and who had helped to clarify some of the complex relationships between living things and show now even a Pilobolus fits into the general scheme of the universe.

Dr. Buller as an individual endowed with a tremendous vitality and an enquiring mind will remain a living force in biological science for generations to come.

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IN THE SERVICES

Corporal David Adams from somewhere in Italy writes of a sunny spring and plenty of fruits, especially lemons and oranges. He hopes to visit some of the schools and gardens before leaving.

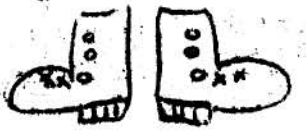
T/5 Donald deZeeuw says that he is learning a few things as a surgical technician which may be of value when he gets back to being a phytopathologist. His "hitch" in Indianapolis is agreeable to him in spite of hospital ward duty.

Capt. Kernkamp's kittenball team in North Africa is his pride and joy in spite of their losing six out of six league games. He says, "Guess the 'old man' will have to go out and show 'em how....Competition is awfully tough." More recent news includes the fact that Kernkamp and his Company crossed the Mediterranean early in June and are now busy guarding railroads and trains in Italy. Kerny's agricultural eye is still open, and he reports wheat+trees+grapes in the same plot.

Lieut. Thomas Laskaris (1st Lieut. since December) arrived in New Guinea in January and proceeded to set up hospital . On a diet of lamb and coconuts "Klebs" threatens to make a mycological collection.

Conrad Olson, B.M. 3/c, Coast Guard, took time out one day to let us know that he was still looking for subs and was in good health.

Lieut. John Rowell still has time to fish in spite of his military duties. He says, "Alice has caught the biggest salmon so far".

Pvt. B. Shema, who is now in "snake-and insect-infested Louisiana" is quite clear as to where he will spend his next furlough. We agree that Minnesota is cooler.

W. D. Thomas, most recent from the "Brickhaus" to enter the armed forces, is stationed at Great Lakes for boot training. He writes, "Somehow I landed an easy berth, easy on the feet, as company clerk. Then too I have been put on the Great Lakes swimming team, so it looks as though I should be in good shape whenever I get out of here."