

resolutions of respect

JOHN M AIKMAN
1893-1975

John M. Aikman, 82, Professor of Botany, conservationist and humanitarian died on July 13, 1975 in Kirbyville, Missouri. He was born in Mason City, Nebraska, March 24, 1893. Following completion of high school at Rulo, Nebraska, he entered Nebraska Wesleyan University, receiving the A.B. degree in 1917. He served in the Medical Corps, U.S. Army, before returning for an A.M. degree and remaining as an Assistant Professor of Botany. He continued his graduate education at the University of Chicago with Professor H. C. Cowles, and the University of Nebraska under Professor J. E. Weaver, receiving his Ph.D. in 1928 from the University of Nebraska after joining the faculty of Iowa State University in 1927 in the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology.

In his teaching of dendrology, field botany, and plant ecology, he emphasized the whole range of environmental relationships that cause plants to grow where they do. On field trips he radiated enthusiasm whether discussing a plant community with advanced ecology students or tree identification with scouts in the woods for the first time. He tied things together at a time when the trend was to take things apart in finer and finer detail. His research on forests and agronomic crops emphasized the holistic approach with taxonomic and physiologic insights. Taking leave from teaching in 1934-35, he directed U.S. Forest Service field research, mapping the distribution of native trees, shrubs, and mixed prairie areas of the Plains States shelterbelt zone. Again, he shifted to research as half-time Project Supervisor, 1937-1947, with the Soil Conservation Service on the Iowa Hillculture Experimental Farm. Later, as Principal Research Advisor with U.S. State Department, Point IV Program, he served as Director of the Tropical Experiment Station, Ecuador in 1951-53. For many years he worked closely with the State Conservation Commission, the Iowa Highway Commission, and the Central States Forest Experiment Station applying plant ecology to specific problems.

John received many honors to which his usual response was a pleased and humble expression of surprise at being chosen. Among others, he received the honorary Sc. D. degree from Nebraska Wesleyan University in 1951; Iowa State University Faculty Citation 1961; and the Iowa Academy of Science Award of Merit 1974. He belonged to numerous professional and honorary societies including Sigma Xi, Phi Kappa Phi, Gamma Sigma Delta, Osborn Club and in 1946 served as President of the Ecological Society of America.

John Aikman played a significant role in conservation long before such participation became popular, serving as chairman of the Conservation Committee of the Iowa Academy of Science from 1941 to 1952 and as a committee member until 1966. Through his leadership the committee was instrumental in securing and setting aside by the State Conservation Commission four prairie remnants in Iowa. He was a member of the national committee which formed The Nature Conservancy, and in 1963 was instrumental in organizing the Iowa Chapter.

John was a dedicated church member throughout his adult life. In 1963 John and his wife, Ella, retired to the southern Missouri Ozarks where they made new friends through botanizing, fishing, gardening and lay leadership in their church. There he continued to learn first-hand all he could about the Ozark plant communities.

John is survived by his wife, Ella, his son, Col. James Aikman of the United States Air Force and his daughter, Mrs. Charles H. Johnson, of Mt. Vernon, Missouri, and was preceded in death by his first wife, Margaret Dafoe Aikman, who died in 1937.

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