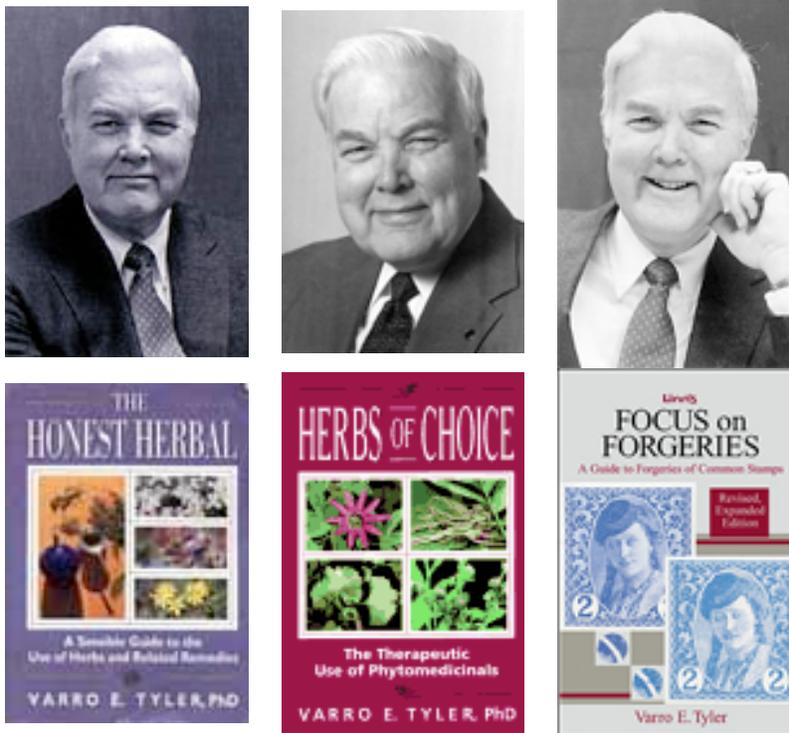


Varro Eugene Tyler, Jr. (1926-2001)



A Memorial by Jim Robbers

Our society lost one of its most revered patriarchs with the death of Varro "Tip" Tyler from a pulmonary embolism on August 22, 2001. He and Ginny, his beloved wife of 54 years, had just returned to West Lafayette the day before from a vacation trip to Austria. Because of jet lag, they rose early on the 22nd. While Ginny was preparing breakfast, she heard Tip softly call her name, and she found him at his desk.

Tip Tyler was one of those unique individuals who cast a long shadow in life having had a profound impact on pharmacy education, natural product science, and the use of herbal medicine by the American public as well as the worldwide community. As a broad view of some of his accomplishments, he was a renowned educator serving Purdue University as Dean of Pharmacy for twenty years before his selection as executive vice president for academic affairs. While a professor at the University of Washington, he conducted a distinguished research career on the chemistry of toxic mushrooms and other fungi. He was the senior author of the most widely used text in pharmacognosy in the United States. He was recognized as one of the nation's leading experts on herbal medicine, an endeavor he was actively engaged in at the time of his death. In philately, he was the world authority on Japanese stamp forgeries, and his signature of authentication is recognized worldwide as without equal.

Concerning the American Society of Pharmacognosy, we owe Tip a tremendous debt. He served as its first president, guiding the organization through the critical first two years (1959-1961) of its existence. He was the principal force in the negotiations to obtain *Lloydia* (Journal of Natural Products) as the official publication of the Society. In addition, he played a major role in forging the friendly ties our Society has with the Gesellschaft für Arzneipflanzenforschung (Society for Medical Plant Research) which has resulted in our joint international meetings every five years starting with Vienna in 1970. Tip was so highly regarded by the Gesellschaft that they elected him to their Board of Directors and to honorary membership.

Tip thoroughly enjoyed sharing his knowledge, and he was a master at communication in both the written and spoken word. After he retired as executive vice president at Purdue in 1991, he devoted his efforts to the area of herbal medicine. He wrote four well-received books on the subject as well as numerous articles in the scientific and lay press, including a regular column in *Prevention* magazine. It became clear that he was a voice of reason in an area fraught with misinformation and hyperbole. As a consequence, he was in great demand as a speaker at conferences and continuing education programs. He appeared on national radio and television programs. As his fame grew, he became inundated with requests for information from the news media and from interested individuals. Although he had an extremely busy schedule and was dealing with personal health problems, he was always generous with his time and answered each query with his usual detailed kindly manner; something a less patient man would have refused to do.

In recognition of his accomplishments, Tip received many honors and accolades; however, he stated more than once that even though these meant a lot to him, what he cherished most was the many friendships he established during his life's work. At this time of our grief on behalf of Tip's friends, many of whom have already gone on to their final reward, I would like to think that somewhere there is a dorm room on a college campus where a group of pharmacognosists are gathered. It is an evening too hot to sleep because there is no air conditioning, and it's the middle of July, the usual time of an ASP meeting. The smoke from Marsh Wheeling cigars hangs heavy in the room, but through the haze you can see the flash of silver hair. Then you hear a deep, melodious, reassuring voice, and you know that it's Tip holding court with his friends. Early in the evening the discussion topic is about science or Society politics, but as the evening wears on and the bottle of Old Bushmills approaches empty, the talk becomes more raucous. There is the occasional ribald joke along with many stories of the escapades of some of our more colorful colleagues -our Society seems to have had more than its share. Tip, being the master storyteller that he was, would be an active participant in the discussion and thoroughly enjoying every minute of it. The group gathered around the room would hang on his every word, and they would have feelings of happiness and contentment knowing everything was right with the world and wishing the evening could go on forever -may it ever be so.

---James E. Robbers