Potato research lost a preeminent figure with the death from pneumonia of Dr. Ora Smith on February 4, 1993, in Ithaca, New York. Dr. Smith was born April 13, 1900, in Freeburg, Illinois. He received a B.S. degree from the University of Illinois, an M.S. from Iowa State University, and a Ph.D. in plant physiology from the University of California in 1929. The following year Dr. Smith joined the Department of Vegetable Crops at Cornell University, where he devoted more than 50 years to research, teaching, and writing about the potato. During this time he was author or co-author of
more than 500 popular and scientific articles, numerous contributions to encyclopedias and handbooks, and two books.

Dr. Smith's career by no means ended upon his appointment as Professor Emeritus in 1967, for he continued his writing as long as his health permitted. The fourth edition of the popular book Potato Processing appeared in 1987, and he had almost completed a third edition of Potatoes: Production, Storing, Processing to update the edition that appeared in 1983. Both books are well-known by growers, processors, and researchers around the world.

Although Dr. Smith carried out research and teaching on many aspects of potato production and storage, he was best known for his work on potato quality, especially quality for processing. After World War II, when he began to give major attention to processing quality, only 2% of the U.S. crop was processed. Dr. Smith anticipated the growing popularity of potato chips and french fries and pioneered studies on how to grow, store, and evaluate potatoes that would have acceptable quality for these uses. He was the first Director for Research of what was then the Potato Chip Institute International (now the Snack Food Institute International), carrying out these duties for 26 years while continuing to serve as a member of the Cornell faculty.

Dr. Smith stressed the importance of tuber specific gravity for processing quality and developed the "potato hydrometer" that is still used widely to measure specific gravity. Another aspect of potato quality emphasized by Dr. Smith was the role of reducing sugars in producing the browning of chips and french fries. He was a pioneer not only in quick methods to measure quality for processing, but also in finding cultural and storage practices that would lead to better quality. Dr. Smith was a forceful spokesman for his views and effectively used both the written and spoken word to persuade others to change.

Under Dr. Smith's supervision 27 students received the Ph.D., many of whom have led prominent careers in research institutes, universities, and agricultural and food industries. Included among these was R.L. Sawyer, first Director General of the International Potato Institute. Dr. Smith himself had a strong international interest. During 1946–47 he was a member of the Staff of the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences in Costa Rica. In 1938 Dr. Smith visited 75 colleges and experiment stations in 18 European countries. Dr. Smith was the only U.S. delegate to the Northwest Europe Potato Association Meeting in 1955; and he regularly attended meetings of the European Association for Potato Research, to which he belonged from the time of its founding.

Dr. Smith was an active member of The Potato Association of America, serving as its secretary for four years and as its president. He was awarded a plaque and cited for his outstanding service to the potato industry in 1959 by the National Potato Council, the first member of the academic field to