

Carl Clifford Lowe

January 1, 1919 — November 29, 1999

Carl C. Lowe, 80, Professor Emeritus, widely known breeder of forage crops, and long-time member of Cornell's Department of Plant Breeding, died suddenly on November 29, 1999. Lowe specialized in breeding forage grasses and legumes. He participated in the development of popular varieties of alfalfa, timothy and birdsfoot trefoil. He also developed refined applications of statistics in experimental design and in plant breeding research.

For 28 years, Lowe taught a popular course in experimental methods for graduate students in the Plant Sciences. He served as advisor for numerous undergraduates and for 14 graduate students. Dr. Lowe's office door was always open to students. Many of his advisees have gone on to distinguished careers of their own.

Lowe worked with seed growers and seed industry leaders in developing programs to bring to farmers the benefits of varieties developed in Cornell plant breeding research. He served as secretary of the NY Seed Improvement Cooperative for 25 years. In this role, he encouraged the adoption of superior varieties by seed growers and farmers.

Lowe was born January 1, 1919, in West Salem, Ohio, the oldest son of Carl and Grace Keener Lowe. His father was an agronomist specializing in sugar beets. The Lowe family soon moved to Twin Falls, Idaho where Carl spent his youth. He attended the University of Idaho in 1938. The family relocated to Fort Collins, Colorado, where his father unexpectedly died. Carl left school and worked for the USDA Agricultural Adjustment Administration from 1940-42.

Carl entered the United States Army in 1942 and served in North Africa, France and Germany as a member of the 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 9th Infantry Division. His unit landed at Utah Beach, Normandy, on D-Day, June 6, 1944, then fought its way across France, and was among the first to cross the Rhine in the invasion of Germany.

After release from active duty he attended Colorado A&M, earning his B.S. degree in 1948. He followed with graduate studies at Cornell, earning his M.S. degree in 1950 and his Ph.D. degree in 1952 in Plant Breeding, under the tutelage of Professors Royse P. Murphy and Walter T. Federer.

Lowe was appointed Assistant Professor of Plant Breeding, at Cornell University in 1952, Associate Professor in 1955, and Professor in 1964. He was named Professor Emeritus in 1983.

Lowe was a member of the American Society of Agronomy, the Crop Science Society of America, Phi Kappa Phi and Sigma Xi. In recognition of his contributions to seed growers and to the seed industry, he was elected an honorary member of the New York State Seed Association.

Dr. Lowe was a pivotal leader in the initiation and development of the Northeast Regional Forage Improvement Project, which continues to coordinate leadership in forage crop breeding and improvement, originally in the Northeast and now nationally. Dr. Lowe also participated in the development and activities of the Northern New York Economic Development Project. He also served as a long-term Consultant to the New York State Fish and Wildlife Service on trout fish breeding and management.

Survivors include his wife and companion of 57 years, Cleo Crane Lowe; one daughter, Ellen Jane Potash, of Franklin, Tennessee; two sons, Donald Lowe, of Ithaca and Cass Lowe, of Seattle, Washington; and two granddaughters, Dru and Carey Potash. Three brothers, three sisters and several nieces and nephews also survive him.

Lowe was an avid outdoorsman, who loved to fish, hunt and garden. The morning sun often found Carl in his boat on Cayuga Lake, luring a lake trout to his line. He died in the woods, suddenly, of natural causes, while hunting deer.

Robert F. Lucey, Royse P. Murphy, William D. Pardee