



## **Ernest Frederick Schaufler**

December 29, 1923 – April 26, 2011

Ernest Frederick Schaufler, Professor Emeritus of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture (now Horticulture) died April 26, 2011 at Longview an Ithacacare Community in Ithaca, NY, at the age of 87. He was the pioneer leader who developed College of Agriculture and Life Science's Cooperative Extension 4-H Floriculture and Ornamental program. This included developing plant science educational programs and resources for youth, teens and adult volunteers in county, regional and statewide 4-H programs.

Ernie was born in Brocton, NY in December 29, 1923 and grew up on a general family farm. He was an active member of 4-H and inspired by Chautauqua County 4-H agent Ken Coombs toward his lifelong profession in 4-H. Ernie graduated from Dunkirk High School in 1941 and matriculated into Cornell's College of Agriculture, Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture in September of 1941.

The early 1940's were very tumultuous times, as WWII was just starting. Ernie requested a leave of absence from Cornell during his sophomore year and joined the United States Army in 1943. He served in the European theater as a member of the US Army Corps of Engineers, 1251<sup>st</sup> Treadway Bridge Company, from March 1943 until he was honorably discharged in 1946.

Ernie re-matriculated in the College of Agriculture in 1946, completed requirements and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1948. He was immediately hired by the Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture as an instructor and charged to develop a program to teach ornamental horticulture in New York State's Cooperative Extension's 4-H Program. At the same time he enrolled in the Department of Education and studied for his Master of Science degree in Education, completed requirements and was awarded the MS degree in 1952.

Ernie was appointed to Assistant Professor in 1954, Associate Professor in 1959 and Full Professor in 1976. He retired in 1983 and was appointed Professor Emeritus status in Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture. He continued working for the department, on a part time basis, for four years.

Ernie's involvement in the 4-H program focused on building horticultural skills and youth development through learning-by-doing, completing projects, participating in meetings and submitting plant science exhibits for evaluation and competition. He worked with other faculty and staff with 4-H responsibilities and served as a mentor and role model to many. Gret Atkins in the College of Human Ecology commented:

*Ernie's interests, expertise and knowledge knew no boundaries. He saw that the goals of the 4-H curriculum are the same regardless of subject matter. I learned more about the philosophy behind 4-H and youth development, the role of the 4-H leader and the real- world responsibilities of the 4-H educators from him than from any other source on or off the campus.*

He visited most every county in NY State, providing program development support and in- service education to both youth and adult leadership. As Niles Brown, former Cooperative Extension 4-H agent in Ontario and Chenango Counties, wrote:

*We always looked forward to seeing and hearing from Ernie. His ideas were always fresh and 'well thought out'. He truly believed in the 4-H program and teaching volunteer adults and teen leaders and helped train a generation or two of 4-H agents and volunteers.*

Kermit Bossard, former Cooperative Extension 4-H agent in Chemung County, remarked:

*Ernie taught us how to teach, how to make learning fun and how to successfully tie plants in with quality of life. Ernie was our connection to the college and through that connection kids learned about Cornell and research.*

His travel habits were unique. Ernie knew every back road and short cut to his destinations. He knew every inexpensive motel and 'best' country diners, especially in upstate NY. His introduction to new faculty and staff to 'life on the road' was a learning experience.

He authored numerous college and department publications that were the cornerstone of county, regional and state-wide plant science 4-H programs. He developed a large number of teaching modules to provide instructors with subject matter information and included extensive detailed slide sets. This information served as the basis for many Northeast Regional 4-H publications and are still used today.

Ernie realized the potential of working through the public school system to reach a larger audience of youth. One of the successful programs he and his colleagues developed was the 'Talking Plant Program'. This program included the curriculum and materials specifically designed to support those teaching plant science to middle school students. This program was used in middle school science curricula in more than 30 counties in NY State and 19 states across the country and Canada.

A multi-talented person, Ernie had a weekly radio program for 9 years in the early 50's, operated by Cornell's WHCU, where he discussed gardening and landscape problems and recommendations.

He served on numerous department committee's and 4-H advisory boards. One of his favorite committee's was the NY State Fair 4-H Committee, in which he participated for a number of years. He served as a judge for the Ornamental Horticulture projects submitted by 4-H members from counties all over the state. He interacted with the youth and volunteers and used the quality and effectiveness of the 4-H fair's competition to evaluate the success of his in-service programs. He also judged thousands of plant science entries at local 4-H fairs and again was able evaluate the success of his plant science 4-H program.

Ernie was an elected member of a number of honorary societies: including Ho-Nun-De-Kah - Honorary Undergraduate Society at Cornell; Phi Delta Kappa- National Honorary Education Fraternity; Pi Alpha Phi - National Honorary Floriculture Fraternity; Epsilon Sigma Phi - National Honorary Extension Fraternity. He was a 40-year member of the American Garden Writers Association and a member of American Society for Horticultural Science.

Ernie received numerous special awards, including awards from his peers, Ornamental Horticulture industry and amateur gardening organizations, indicating his broad influence on Ornamental Horticulture; including: 1973 The Alice Doscher Horticulture Bronze Medal by the Federated Garden Clubs of New York State; 1977 Distinguished Service Award by Epsilon Sigma Phi the National Honorary Extension Fraternity and 1996 Gold Medal of Horticulture Award by the New York State Nursery/Landscape Association.

Ernie met his future wife, Beverly Harding Pratt, a student in the College of Home Economics (now College of Human Ecology) at a 4-H campus club meeting. They were married in 1949 and had 3 children: Donald, Katherine ('77) and Douglas.

Bev and Ernie purchased an old farmhouse at the intersection of Turkey Hill Road and Mt. Pleasant Road in 1951. It had a gorgeous view of Cornell, Ithaca and West Hill. In addition to renovating the house, they had a 'Horticulturist's Garden', including shrubs, trees, perennials and annuals, plus a large vegetable garden with extensive plantings of berry bushes and fruit trees, many of the crops they canned and/or froze. He lived what he preached.

Bev and Ernie enjoyed camping and the family spent many vacations camping at state parks throughout New York and New England. After retiring, they purchased a 5-wheel travel trailer and migrated to Alabama's Gulf Coast each winter.

Ernie was involved in a number of community activities. They lived in the small community of Varna. It had a volunteer Fire Department and Ernie joined and was an active member for 58 years. He took a leadership role serving as vice chairman for a number of years. He was chairman of the Acacia Corporation. He served on the Board of Directors for the Ithaca Coop Food Store. He was president of Ithaca Memorial Society. Since he had 2 boys, lived in a small community, it followed when they came of age they would get involved in Boy Scouts and so

did Ernie. In addition to all the tasks involved in this activity, he served in a leadership role as a committeeman for the Varna Boy Scout Troop 45. Both of his sons achieved Eagle Scout.

In 2008 Ernie and Bev moved to Longview, a retirement home, where it was easier for them to enjoy life.

Ernie was a calm, quiet, hardworking individual, who had the ability to make one feel comfortable and welcomed. He enjoyed life, was a wonderful family man and a committed and dedicated horticulturist. He wanted everyone to understand enough about plants and horticulture to be able to enjoy them. He felt through 4-H, he had a platform to achieve this worthy goal. It would be interesting to obtain statistics to see how many children, teens and adult volunteers were inspired by Ernie's interest and passion for horticulture and how his enthusiasm led to a lifelong interest in horticulture. We are sure it would be measured in the thousands and that is a real accomplishment.

*Robert W. Langhans, Chairperson; Joann Gruttadaurio, A. Martin Petrovic*