



Henry N. Ricciuti

December 25, 1917 – March 14, 2011

Henry's long career was distinguished in part by the invaluable service he provided at the highest levels, both locally and nationally, where he was sought out for his wise advice and leadership skills. When the College of Human Ecology was reorganized in the late 1960s, there were numerous politically sensitive issues that had to be navigated, including the name of the new college and the nature of its component departments. Henry was tapped to lead this effort along with Professor Sally Blackwell, and the reorganization committee came to be known as the Blackwell-Ricciuti Committee. To this day, Henry's imprint can be seen on the College of Human Ecology.

Henry was called on three times to serve as department chair of Human Development, and agreed to do so twice (1970-73, 1982-86). His leadership role was instrumental in the department's transition from a strictly applied orientation to one that was also known internationally for its basic research informing policies related to children and families. So successful was the model that many other universities imitated Human Development at Cornell and nationally his vision came to predate the current evidence-based goals of many agencies.

Henry believed deeply that scholarship could and should inform policies and practices. In the 1970s, out-of-home child care became an important issue as young mothers were increasingly entering or remaining in the labor force. He designed and served as project director for a pioneering infant care center serving both Cornell and the community. His research on the topic informed a 1976 position paper he wrote on infant day care and child development, commissioned by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

As day care became more prominent, it also became controversial, with conflicting claims about its advantages and disadvantages arising from different studies. Recognizing the importance of the issue for policy and for family choices, the National Institutes of Health brought the key

scholars in the field together to re-examine their data and to design a large-scale study to try to resolve the issues. In 1989, Henry was chosen to chair the steering committee of what became the highly influential and costly longitudinal Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, which was conducted at 10 sites around the country and involved more than 50 investigators. Henry's signature was clearly visible in the study's design and implementation. Even after stepping down as its chair, he continued to advise the leadership at NIH as part of the five-member advisory board. The study ultimately identified the critical features of day care programs that affect children's development.

Henry's valuable contributions to the Child Care study, and his many other service contributions over the years, were formally acknowledged by the Society for Research in Child Development in 2001, when Henry was selected to receive the society's prestigious award for Distinguished Contributions to Public Policy for Children.

When Henry officially retired in 1988, it was truly only on paper. He continued to do research and to publish. Not surprisingly, the publication of which he was proudest was one that he co-authored with his daughter, Anne. Henry's office door was always open, and he was rarely alone. He counseled a string of diverse visitors. Graduate students continued to rely on him for methodological suggestions for their research. They also depended on him as a sounding board for their ideas; they knew that Henry would not only help them refine their ideas, but would also be open and encouraging about ideas that were still in the development stage. Assistant professors, too, relied on Henry to shepherd them through the system. He was someone with whom they could be honest, with every expectation that their concerns would be kept confidential and that he would use his experience and wisdom to provide them with good counsel. Because he had few illusions about political realities, Henry was able to help people deal with them effectively.

In addition to being a deeply respected scientist, advocate, teacher, and mentor, Henry was also a model academic to his colleagues, especially the younger ones who saw his professional behavior as the way to be a good professor. They were inspired by Henry's fundamentally positive outlook, which was manifest in all he did. They admired his ability to disagree with others without dismissing them, and to see their personal strengths in spite of their flaws. Whether he was asking a question of a new graduate student after their first research presentation, or challenging the logic of an eminent scholar at a large conference, his manner revealed the respect he had for others and what they held to be important.

Henry's approach to complex or contentious issues was calm and rational, reflecting an underlying optimism that a resolution was always possible. His comments during faculty meetings were not only fair and objective, they were wisely integrative. The thoughts he shared added value to the discussion rather than merely staking out a position. Even after meetings were over, he would sometimes send open "memos" to all his colleagues to explain how he saw things and to make suggestions about how to proceed. These notes were always carefully thought out, diplomatic, and genuinely useful.

Henry's positive, constructive approach to things benefited all of us over many years. It is no surprise that he was the only person to serve two separate times as department chair in the last 65

years. We were fortunate, indeed, that he continued to share his wisdom, hope, and optimism with all of us for over 20 years after his retirement. In his eulogy, Henry's pastor said that Henry was as close to a saint as he had ever met. Henry Ricciuti passed away at the age of 93 at his home in Ithaca. He is survived by his wife of 61 years Florence Brennan Ricciuti, his sons; James and Thomas; daughters, Anne and Mary; grandchildren, Michael, Paul and Brennan.

Steve Robertson; Chairperson; Steve Hamilton, Steve Ceci, Barbara Koslowski