



## **W. Keith Kennedy**

January 4, 1919 – February 18, 2011

W. Keith Kennedy, Professor emeritus and Provost emeritus, spent most of his professional life as a researcher, teacher, and administrator at Cornell University. He followed a very productive teaching and research career with an exceptional administrative career at Cornell. He died on February 18, 2011 at the age of 92 in Ithaca, NY. He is survived by two adult sons and their families.

Keith Kennedy was born January 4, 1919 in Vancouver, Washington, and was raised on a diversified farm in western Washington. In 1940, after receiving a B.S. degree from the State College of Washington. He received the scholarship trophy for the top freshman in the College of Agriculture and graduated with highest honors. He began graduate work at Cornell in 1940, and obtained an M.S. degree in Agriculture in 1941. He began work toward a Ph.D. degree, but then entered the U.S. Army in 1942 as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the infantry. He rose from Platoon leader to Company Commander to Battalion Commander during his tenure. He obtained the rank of Major in 1945 and was released from the service in February, 1946, with two commendations and an efficiency rating of excellent. Returning to Cornell, Keith received his Ph.D. in agronomy in 1947, with minors in animal nutrition and plant breeding. His Doctoral thesis was a study of the effect of different pasture management practices on the yield, botanical composition and chemical composition of pasture herbage. In August, 1947 Keith joined the faculty of Washington State College. He turned down a Cornell job offer that included a salary (\$4,500/year) significantly lower than his Washington State salary, but Dr. Richard Bradfield persisted and Keith was hired by Cornell as an Associate Professor of Agronomy in 1948. He was promoted to full professor in 1949.

During his early research years, Keith focused on methods of preservation of hay, silage and grain, and on increasing production of pasture and forage crops through improved

management. He was a leader in the development of cooperative forage research by the Departments of Agronomy, Animal Science, and Plant Breeding, and was a life-long advocate of the interdisciplinary, problem-solving approach to research. He worked in New Zealand as a Guggenheim Fellow and Fulbright Research Scholar in the 1950s, and achieved international recognition for his research in forage crop production, preservation, and use.

Keith moved into administration in 1959, and remained in various Cornell administration positions for 35 years. He became the Associate Director of Research for the College of Agriculture and the Associate Director of Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station in 1959. Three months later he was named Director of Research and Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station. In July 1965 he was appointed Associate Dean of the NYS College of Agriculture and in 1967 he was named vice-provost of the university. In 1972 he began a six- year term as Dean of the newly named College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. In 1978 he was named University Provost, and remained at that position until his retirement in 1984.

Keith Kennedy's contributions to Cornell University and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences are immeasurable. In retirement Keith continued to serve the university as acting dean of admissions and financial aid. He was a vice-president of the Atlantic Philanthropic Service Company, Inc., in Ithaca, and was active on behalf of numerous non-profit agencies in the Ithaca area. He received Cornell's Frank H.T. Rhodes award for Exemplary Alumni Service in 2010. He also received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Cayuga Medical Center at Ithaca, and the Agda Osborne Award from Family and Children's Service of Ithaca.

Kennedy Hall was dedicated in 1990, a tribute to W. Keith Kennedy, as one of the great builders of Cornell and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Keith stated his philosophy of administration clearly.

*An administrative organization can do one of two things. It can make a lot of rules and regulations or it can provide facilities and funds to aid individuals. We try to avoid the rules and provide the help.*

These words reflected Keith's attitude and leadership skills. His administrative talents lead both the university and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences through several decades of unprecedented growth. His vision and dedication helped create the multifaceted intellectual environment that today makes Cornell one of the world's great teaching and research universities. Keith Kennedy's unflinching honesty and integrity won him the admiration and respect of all who knew him.

*Jerry Cherney, Chairperson; Ralph Obendorf, Gary Fick*