

# Helen Gertrude Canoyer

*June 20, 1903 — February 25, 1984*

Helen G. Canoyer, retired dean of the College of Home Economics (now the College of Human Ecology) and emeritus professor of household economics and management, was distinguished in academic and government circles as an administrator, educator, adviser, and trailblazer for women. During her Cornell deanship Canoyer instigated the evaluation of the College of Home Economics that eventually led to its reorganization as the College of Human Ecology. She also spearheaded the drive to build the new wing of Martha Van Rensselaer Hall, which was dedicated in 1968, shortly before her retirement, and began an annual institute for community leaders that was held for many years.

Born in Melrose, Minnesota, Dean Canoyer attended secondary schools throughout the Midwest. She received her B.S., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from the School of Business Administration at the University of Minnesota, then served on the faculty there for more than twenty years as an assistant, associate, and full professor of economics and marketing. Dr. Canoyer was one of the first women to be awarded a doctoral degree in economics with specialization in consumer economics and marketing.

During World War II Dean Canoyer left her academic post to serve as an economic analyst in the food section of the War Production Board. She then held an appointment as an economist in the distribution division of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Department of Commerce, and in 1945-46 was the assistant chief, Division of Research and Statistics, Office of Alien Property Custodian.

In 1954 Dr. Canoyer, on becoming dean of the College of Home Economics, was also appointed the first woman faculty member of Cornell's (then) Graduate School of Business and Public Administration; she taught a course in the school's marketing program.

Dean Canoyer was dedicated to the development and maintenance of excellence in the three thrusts of the college: resident education, research, and extension. Her drive and energy resulted in strong growth in these three areas. Her interests were broad and eclectic and included education in home economics for both men and women. She enthusiastically encouraged young men to explore the field of home economics as a career.

One of her most compelling interests was in promoting the professional growth of women, as she saw society emphasizing more and more the dual role of women in homemaking and in work outside the home. She believed

that the basic changes that reshaped the living pattern in the home made it essential for more women to be equipped to make the complex adjustments resulting from this dual role.

This interest was intensified through her involvement in international programs of women's education. She was one of a group of United States educators who conducted workshops in East and West Africa on "Problems of Education of African Women Educators." The workshops were followed by a request from the government of Ghana for help from the faculty of the College of Home Economics. The resulting cooperative project, along with projects in Liberia and the Philippines, continued for several years and involved several faculty in the college.

Honored for her professional contributions, Dean Canoyer received the University of Minnesota's 1956 alumni achievement award "for her distinguished achievement record."

In 1962 President John F. Kennedy appointed Dr. Canoyer as chairperson of his Consumer Advisory Council. She oversaw the compilation of a council report that was later published. In 1963 she received a citation of appreciation from the American Home Economics Association for her service to the federal government and to peoples of other countries. The citation specifically referred to her chairpersonship of the Consumer Advisory Council, saying she had "steadfastly represented the interests of the consumer; established the value of home economics as a discipline fundamental to the welfare of the consumer; brought to other members of the association inspiration in professional service to the consumer; and cooperated with recognized leaders to determine and develop the means by which the consumer may be heard, may be protected, may speak, and may be informed." At that time she had just completed a term on the Commission on Federal Relations of the American Council on Education.

Other professional activities through the years included being a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Marketing* (1941-47); chairperson of the Land Grant Home Economics Study Proposal Committee; director of the American Marketing Association; director of the National Association of Consumers; director of Consumers Union; director of Grand Union; member of the American Council on Education; officer of the New York State Minimum Wage Board for Retail Trade; and member of the Council of the New York State Department of Commerce and Agricultural Advisory Committee.

She co-authored, with Professor Vaile, two books: *Income and Consumption* and *The Economics of Income and Consumption*. She also contributed numerous articles on home economics, cooperatives, and the role of land-grant colleges to a variety of professional journals. She was an accomplished speaker and was in frequent demand by both national and international groups.

Throughout her tenure at Cornell she was a dynamic and incisive leader. Her energy, drive, and vision contributed significantly to the present high status of the college.

She retired from Cornell University in 1968 and went to the University of Massachusetts to serve as dean of home economics. She moved to San Francisco in the late seventies, where she resided until her death, in 1984.

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