

# Frederick H. Stutz

*December 26, 1912 — April 22, 1983*

The death of Frederick H. Stutz, professor of history of education emeritus, closed a lifelong commitment to education and its role in developing and sustaining a democratic society.

Stutz grew up in Ithaca with a foot in the country, for the division between city and open country was abrupt then. An interest in Cornell University, which he entered in 1931, was fostered by his parents and teachers at Ithaca High School, in the 1920s primarily a preparatory school for Cornell. Stutz obtained a B.A. degree at Cornell in 1935 and an M.A. degree in 1937 with a concentration in American history. Jobs during the depression were hard to get, but at six feet two inches he looked as if he could handle discipline problems. He later learned that his stature had something to do with obtaining his first secondary school teaching post at Bainbridge in Chenango County.

When asked what he expected to accomplish in that job, he said, "I saw the power of civic instruction and the study of history as having an enormous potential for helping us to improve society and for helping individuals to straighten out their lives and fly straight. Now," he added, "I regard that as a naiveté of youth....I failed to understand how complex social structures were and how difficult it was to enable individuals to change that through the power of their learning." Stutz moved to Ithaca, where he taught social studies in Ithaca High School and chaired his department. Stutz's work for the Ph.D. degree in education, which he received from Cornell in 1945, included extensive studies in United States and European history.

Stutz's first position after receiving the Ph.D. degree was as assistant professor at Michigan State College, then beginning the transition to a state university. Two years later Stutz returned to Cornell as an assistant professor of education in the College of Arts and Sciences, where he supervised students preparing for secondary school teaching and carried on research in the history of education. Stutz also served as director of the Summer Session from 1949 to 1952. In 1952 he joined Rural Education, a department that carried Liberty Hyde Bailey's commitment to return to a quality-of-life emphasis in the College of Agriculture.

As a member of the school board for the Ithaca City School District from 1952 to 1958, Stutz returned to the problem of how to make education serve both the needs of society and individual citizens. Educators were caught between those who would meet the challenge of Sputnik by tightening educational standards and those who favored giving priority to the development of the individual. As board chairman in 1957-58 Stutz encouraged

the development of alternative approaches to education, an allocation of resources he found quite consistent with concerns about quality in education.

From 1958 to 1966 he was dean of the School of Education. Under his vigorous leadership the school grew in size and significance, bringing together many new faculty members in both endowed and statutory units of the University. Dean Stutz was instrumental in securing Ford Foundation support for an experimental junior high school project featuring teaching internships in selected cooperating public schools throughout New York State. He and the deans of the upstate Universities of Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse obtained a substantial grant from the Ford Foundation to develop interinstitutional Master of Arts in Teaching and administrative intern programs. In the mid-sixties Stutz served as project leader for the New York State Regents Advisory Committee on Educational Leadership. In 1967 the School of Education was merged with the Department of Education in the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

As a Cornell professor from 1954 to 1978, Fred was a productive teacher. From his classes came many students who accepted responsibilities in all areas of academic life—as counselors, educators, professors, administrators. Fred’s character in service was open, honest, fair, hardworking, liberal, and flavored with wit and humor.

In teaching, Fred taught by questioning, turning facts into puzzles, turning the conventional policy into an inquiry in history or philosophy or sociology. There was no doubt that Fred loved educating and did not turn away from those sometimes terrifying tasks of teaching deliberately, firmly, carefully, and with ever-present support for novice and experienced alike. Fred made accessible to others the wisdom of many sources. He became an expert in what can be called the social humanities, a blend of tradition and pertinence, ideas and persons. Fred lived out the land-grant philosophy Cornell holds dear. He was a formidable teacher—a scholar who was graced with a common touch. Whoever you were, you could not help but learn something every time you had a conversation with Fred Stutz.

His many roles as an administrator—department head, dean, school board president, member of many service committees—revealed his compassion and commitment. He seemed to lead easily and well, and tasks just seemed naturally to have his name on them. He knew how to leave just as easily so others could take charge and grow through such responsibilities. He was active in local and state politics and helped many good causes develop into programs.

At the time of his retirement, Stutz the administrator was instrumental in establishing a closer linkage between research efforts at Cornell and the small and rural school systems of the state and nation. Fred Stutz believed that planning could improve the educational opportunities of rural and disadvantaged youth. He had a clear vision of how the community of which he was a part and the school system in which he was so deeply interested could be brought together. The Rural Schools Program, established in 1979, carries Stutz's vision. Fred served as the program's first director, and under his guidance some three hundred school districts joined the program Fred did so much to develop, guide, and support. The success of the program is testimony to the clarity of his vision and the steadfastness of his commitment as an administrator.

Stutz the historian was also active to the night he died in his sleep. Fred was interested in community decision-making processes, especially those occasioned by proposals to consolidate school districts. Fred used his retirement to study the history of school district organization in New York State. While this project remains incomplete, Fred had the foresight to involve others in this work, and these colleagues share Fred's determination to see the project through to completion. The work is continuing.

The many social receptions at the Stutz house were both entertaining and edifying in the often complex blend of assembled talent and experience. Sally Stutz, with her own highly developed competence as an educator, was Fred's equal in joy and good sense. They were definitely a well-matched team.

Fred personally suffered the demise of the Graduate School of Education, but he protected junior and senior faculty members. Many felt that to have gotten through is to have done it well. An optimist looking forward, he did not suffer the pain of vindictiveness or retribution. His character lasted.

He was a keen and bemused observer of events, a recorder like a good journalist with a public conscience; some things, like civic virtue, were sacred. He experienced many little joys every day and felt progress from science, technology, and agriculture improved everyday living.

We are grateful for the life of this inspiring man and thankful for his continuing presence in so many of the things we do.

*Gould P. Colman, David H. Monk, D. Bob Gowin*