

Harlan Parker Banks

September 1, 1913 — November 22, 1998

Harlan Parker Banks, Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor Emeritus in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, died on Sunday, November 22, 1998, at his retirement home in New Hampshire after a short illness.

Professor Banks was born on September 1, 1913, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and graduated in 1930 from Classical High School in nearby Lynn. He received his B.S. degree in 1934 from Dartmouth College where he spent three further years as Instructor in Botany and held a Cramer Fellowship for Graduate Study. A Cornellian there, Professor Carl L. Wilson, interested him in plant anatomy and morphology and this expanded into the study of fossil plants. Most of his subsequent research was done in paleobotany, commencing with a doctoral dissertation at Cornell under the tutelage of the late Professor Loren C. Petry.

From 1940, he taught at Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, where he became Associate Professor of Botany before leaving in 1947 for a similar position at the University of Minnesota. Upon retirement of the late Arthur J. Eames in 1949, Banks returned to Cornell as Associate Professor of Botany, Professor (1950-77), and as Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor (1977), retiring in 1978. During this period he also served as head of the Department of Botany, 1950-61, and upon formation of the Division of Biological Sciences, was associated with the Section of Genetics, Development, and Physiology.

Professor Banks and most of his 34 graduate students literally and figuratively quarried the rich Devonian fossil deposits of early land plants in New York for notable contributions to our understanding of the origin, structure, and evolution of these plants. Authorship or joint authorship of over 150 scientific papers, reviews, films, and one book on paleobotany—*Evolution and Plants of the Past*—led to his international recognition as a major authority on the earliest land plants. An effervescent lecturer, he was invited to lecture at some 70 universities and colleges in the continental United States and Puerto Rico, at 20 universities or scholarly societies in Europe, Asia, and Australia, as well as to numerous science clubs, museums, research institutions, and other departments within Cornell. He also was the paleobotany Lecturer at the Centennial Celebration of the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University in 1966; held the David French Lectureship, Pomona College, in 1971; was guest lecturer at the Third International Gondwana Conference, Canberra, Australia, in 1973; and the W.W. Rubey Lecturer at UCLA, in 1976. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Dartmouth College in 1984,

and in 1987, he was elected as one of 50 foreign members of the Linnean Society of London and received the Paleontological Society's U.S. gold medal, awarded to a paleobotanist for the first time since 1970.

Despite many obligations, and always with good humor, he served as minor advisor to over 25 graduate students a year. In addition to his major graduate students, he averaged a dozen undergraduate advisees a year, and he kept an open door to countless other students and colleagues who sought his advice.

In the tradition of distinguished teaching in botany at Cornell, Harlan Banks was recognized within and without the university as not only exceedingly popular but also as a truly great teacher in his generation. This was particularly so in the introductory courses at Cornell, although he also taught upper-level courses and was associated with various short courses in summer institutions or commissions on education sponsored by the Botanical Society of America, the National Science Foundation, and American Institute of Biological Sciences. In 1961, he received the Certificate of Merit from Seniors in the College of Agriculture, and in 1975, the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Further honors for teaching and research came in the form of selection by the Faculty of the University of Liège to be a Fulbright Research Scholar in Belgium in 1957-58; election as Corresponding Member, Société Géologique de Belgique in 1959; as John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellow with tenure at the University of Liège and at Cambridge University in 1963-64; as Fellow of Clare Hall, Cambridge University in 1968; and as Honorary Vice President, XII International Botanical Congress, Leningrad, in 1975. In the same year, he was awarded a Certificate of Merit by the Botanical Society of America, which he had served as member of the Editorial Board, Secretary Pro-tem (1952-53), Treasurer (1964-67), Vice President (1968), and President (1969).

He was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and he also served in various capacities with the International Organization of Paleobotany (Vice President, 1964-69; President 1969-75), Paleontological Society (Councilor-at-Large, 1974) and was a member of the Paleontological Association, International Society of Plant Morphologists, International Association for Plant Taxonomy, Torrey Botanical Club, Paleontological Research Institution, Commission Internationale Microflore Paleozoïque, Asociacion Latinamericana de Paleobotanica y Palinologia, Sigma Xi (President, Cornell Chapter 1954-56), Beta Beta Beta, Gamma Alpha, and Ho-Nun-De-Kah (Honorary Member, 1959). From 1977-83, he served on the United States National Committee for the International Union of Biological Sciences sponsored by the National Academy of Science, and was elected to the National Academy of Science in 1980. Continuing his activities after he retired, he published 11 papers

during the 1990s. In December 1997, he delivered the monthly lecture at the New England Botanical Club in Cambridge.

His wife, Rosamund L. (Kit) Shurtleff Banks and a daughter, Jane Angstrom, survive him. Funeral arrangements will be private. Donations in memory of Professor Banks may be made to Cornell Plantations.

John Kingsbury, Karl Niklas, Natalie Uhl