

Foster Lee Gambrell

October 31, 1900 — April 27, 1967

On April 27, 1967, Foster Lee Gambrell, Professor of Entomology at Geneva, suffered a stroke while at the LaGuardia Airport in New York City and died several hours later. Earlier that day he had presented a paper before the Eastern Plant Board.

Dr. Gambrell was born at Pendleton, South Carolina, October 31, 1900. He was reared on a farm. From his farm experience he learned of the hard work, long hours, and problems that are associated with farming, but he also learned of the satisfactions that come from growing things. This interest in plants and in their growth and protection appears to have been deep-seated; it saw specific application throughout his professional career.

Dr. Gambrell received his undergraduate education at Clemson Agricultural and Mechanical College, now Clemson University. Upon graduation in 1923, he registered for graduate work in the field of entomology at Ohio State University. He was awarded both the M.S. degree in 1925 and the Ph.D. degree in 1930 from Ohio State University. Dr. Gambrell was appointed to the staff of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in 1925 as an assistant in research. Subsequently, he advanced through the grades of associate in research in 1938—with a title change to Assistant Professor in 1942—Associate Professor in 1946, and Professor in 1956. At the time of his death, Dr. Gambrell had completed forty-two years of continuous service with the University on Cornell's Geneva campus. Scheduled to retire July 1, 1967, he had asked for and had been granted a one year's extension of his active-duty status.

Early in his career at Geneva, Dr. Gambrell assisted senior members of the staff in their research on pests of tree fruit. With his appointment to the research associateship, however, he was asked to assume research responsibilities for pest problems of nursery crops, cultivated turf, and woody ornamental plants. In this field he soon became the respected consultant of nurserymen, arborists, park officials, state and federal plant-regulatory officials, homeowners, and others. For many years he served as the unpaid consultant to the Boards of Public Works of Geneva and Penn Yan on the pest-control program that should be carried out to protect the shade trees of these cities.

An event took place in 1942 which did much to shape his professional career. This was the discovery of an infestation of the European chafer at Newark, New York—the first for North America. Dr. Gambrell was a codiscoverer of this infestation. The new pest presented problems not only of how to control it in established situations but also of

how to prevent or slow its spread to other areas. Dr. Gambrell became deeply involved in devising ways and means of meeting both of these objectives. Informed persons would agree that from about 1955 he became the leading authority on the European chafer. Certainly he was always a central figure in the innumerable conferences which were held to devise means of containing this introduced species.

An active member of the Entomological Society of America, he also claimed Membership in the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Sigma Xi, and Gamma Alpha. He published some sixty professional papers. These dealt principally with pest problems of nursery and ornamental plants and with the European chafer.

Perhaps Dr. Gambrell's fine personal qualities were best displayed in his handling of visitors who had a large or small pest problem in their lawn, shrub, or shade tree. For a research worker, such assignments fall into the extracurricular area, but Dr. Gambrell never gave a visitor that impression. He was invariably courteous, sympathetic, and attentive; and he was able to provide either a workable solution to the problem or to satisfy the individual that he should allow nature to take its course. From the amount of "repeat business" he received, his advice must have been sound, and his manner of imparting it, effective. He made many friends for the Geneva Station through this fine public service.

Dr. Gambrell's personal interests, aside from those concerning his immediate family, were largely in nature study. He shared this interest with his wife, a professional biologist in her own right. Their specific areas of interest were botany, ornamental horticulture, ecology, and ornithology. They took many trips and treks in pursuit of these interests, locally, in other parts of this country, and abroad. Dr. Gambrell was a skilled amateur ornithologist. He was long a member of the local bird club, the Eaton Bird Club and served several years as its president. Dr. Gambrell's other hobbies included gardening and photography.

He is survived by his wife, Dr. Lydia Jahn Gambrell, head of the Department of Biology at Keuka College; two sons, Foster Lee Gambrell, Jr., of Owings Mills, Maryland, Kenneth Carl Gambrell of Auburn, New York; two grandchildren and a brother, Fred M. Gambrell of Pendleton, South Carolina.

Dr. Gambrell will be missed by his many friends and colleagues, inside and outside Cornell.

S. E. Lienk, F. L. McEwen, P. J. Chapman