

Arch T. Dotson

July 19, 1920 — April 6, 2006

Arch T. Dotson, Professor Emeritus of Government at Cornell University, died April 6, 2006 at the age of 85. He had been sound of mind and body virtually until the end, teaching until his voice was too weak to be heard. A “country boy” born and bred in Paris, Kentucky, he worked from his early teens on farms managed by his father. Arch left for World War II just short of his B.A. degree from Transylvania College and joined the Army Air Force as a “check pilot,” becoming a jock in every warplane up to the B-29. Discharged with the rank of major, the GI Bill got him through the Harvard Ph.D. degree and a postdoc at the London School of Economics. His entire academic career was at Cornell, beginning in 1950, as a dedicated teacher, serving beyond his retirement as a teacher and, respectively, as Director of Cornell-in-Washington, Director of Cornell Abroad and Director of the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs.

Arch’s field, his professional identity, was public administration. As was true of so many in this subfield of political science, Arch was not well known as a publishing scholar. He wrote copiously, but for clients, not journals—and for public clients, not corporate or private clients. He did this exclusively from 1958-60 as a deputy controller of the State of New York. Other clients were, for shorter durations, the U.N., the Ford Foundation, and the governments of India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Iran, Jordan, the PRC, Eritrea and Mexico. Another of his clients was Cornell University. His seven-year stint as chairman of the Department of Government (1969-76) were dedicated to rebuilding the department after the campus crisis of the late 60s. In the 1980s, he was instrumental in the founding and success of Cornell-in-Washington, Cornell Abroad and the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs.

It would be difficult to identify anyone ever associated with Cornell—faculty, administrators, trustees or alumni—who has left a more important mark on this institution. The Government Department now holds its own among the top ten in the nation. Cornell-in-Washington and Cornell Abroad became and continue to be models for universities with Washington programs and programs abroad. And the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs has grown in size and stature among schools, programs and institutes for public affairs. The Dotson legacy should not—will not—be forgotten.

Arch chose the path of reform, practice and teaching; and he pursued that path to the very end with integrity, vigor, honor and distinction. Arch was one of the exemplars of the great tribute to public service made by Louis Brownlow in the title of Volume Two of his autobiography, *A Passion for Anonymity*.