

Harrison A. Geiselmann

January 11, 1920 — September 3, 2003

Harrison A. Geiselmann, Professor Emeritus of Education, was born in New York City on January 11, 1920, eight minutes after his identical twin brother, John. He attended elementary and part of junior high school in New York City where, at age eleven, he and his twin brother played the violin at a concert in Carnegie Hall highlighting promising young musicians. Later, he would woo his girlfriend, Audrey Rowell, by serenading her family with that same violin. His family moved to Franklin, New York where he graduated from high school in 1938, lettering in basketball, football, baseball, and track. It was in this beautiful region of upstate New York where he learned to love trout fishing in the many nearby streams. A teacher, recognizing Harrison's artistic and academic potential, encouraged him to take another year of high school, where he completed all of the necessary college preparatory classes, then applied for and received a full tuition scholarship to Syracuse University's School of Architecture. Three weeks into his senior year at Syracuse, he was called into "Uncle Sam's Army". He was selected for the Army's Specialized Training Program (APST) at Fordham University; but the Army was in such great need of infantrymen that it terminated the program, and Harrison became a parachute rigger. He was transferred to the European Theater as a medic, where he later was wounded, then recovered and resumed active duty. After V-Day, during a furlough before being transferred from the European Theater to the Pacific, he went home and married his high school sweetheart, Audrey Rowell, with whom he enjoyed a fifty-eight year love affair and friendship, until his passing.

After his honorable discharge in 1945, he returned to upstate New York and entered Hartwick College, where he completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics in 1947. He began teaching high school mathematics and coaching basketball at Unadilla Central School in nearby Unadilla, New York. He and his twin brother, John, played town team basketball, outwitting the competition with skill and look-alike confusion. He began working on his Master's degree at Syracuse University, completing it in 1962. Unbeknownst to Harrison, the chairman of his Master's program at Syracuse recommended him for a Ph.D. fellowship at Cornell University with the responsibility for developing a Mathematics and Mathematics Education curriculum for the College of Agriculture, now known as the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. In the fall of 1952, he moved his wife, Audrey, and newborn baby, Nancy, to Ithaca, where he began the doctoral program at Cornell's School of Education, completing his Ph.D. degree in three years. Once again, a teacher recognizing his potential led him to a

wonderful opportunity, and a long and satisfying career at Cornell. He joined the faculty as an Assistant Professor, rose to the rank of Professor, and was awarded Emeritus status in 1985.

Harrison was an active member of the Association of Mathematics Teachers of New York State (AMTNYS), serving as editor of the New York State Math Teachers journal from 1968-72, the organization's president from 1972-73, and long-time contributor of a regular journal article entitled "Have you tried this?" At Cornell, he oversaw the publication of several handbooks and study guides in mathematics and served as Graduate Faculty Representative. In 1985, he won the prestigious SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. He never lost his love of sports, being a dependable fan at Cornell sporting events, especially football, basketball, and hockey. He started canoeing and cross-country skiing at age 52 and, after a forty or fifty year hiatus, once again began playing tennis and violin at the age of 70.

Professor Geiselman had a keen sense of humor, and loved to bring humor into his mathematics classes, which resulted in an unforgettable incident. One day his identical twin brother, Johnny, visited the campus on a day when Harrison taught a large class at 8:00 in the morning. Soon after the students took their seats, Professor Geiselman began his lecture. After a few minutes, another Professor Geiselman walked through the door and up to the podium. Two Professor Geiselmanns! The class was in hysterics, having no prior knowledge of his identical twin. Many of the Cornell hockey team players took his class, so he enjoyed following the careers of the former students who continued to play pro hockey. In the last year of Harrison's life, he had the pleasure of watching Joe Niewendeik, his former student, play his last year of pro hockey—a long and rewarding career for both.

In his retirement, Harrison and his wife, Audrey, began spending increasing amounts of the wintertime in Englewood, Florida, and left Ithaca completely in 1994. They spent summers in Lancaster, Pennsylvania near their daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter, and eventually moved to Florida full time in 2000. While in Florida, Harrison started a "new career" at Park Forest in Englewood. He developed a Henny Youngman-style comedy/violin routine that he performed in the yearly Park Forest Broadway show for nine years. He and Audrey also sang in the show's chorus every year. After the success of the routine, he was always asked to tell a joke, wherever he was, so he prepared by studying joke books regularly, and memorizing a litany of jokes so he could always be prepared. He became the most well-known and beloved person at Park Forest. His truly was a life well lived. He passed away on September 3, 2003; he would have liked the mathematical relationship between the numbers in the date, $9 = 3 \times 3$.

Harrison is survived by his wife, Audrey, who lives in the Highlands Retirement Community in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, and his daughter, Nancy Geiselman Hamill (B.A., Arts '74), and granddaughter, Karen Hamill, in Reinholds, Pennsylvania.

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