

# Maurie Semel

*January 18, 1923 — February 10, 2005*

Maurie Semel, Professor Emeritus of Entomology, died on February 10, 2005 in Bucyrus, Ohio. Maurie was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He attended the N.Y.S. Institute of Agriculture at Farmingdale, Long Island, receiving an Associate in Applied Science degree. After serving in an aviation unit of the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II, he attended Cornell University, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in 1949 and his Ph.D. degree in 1954.

In 34 years on the Cornell faculty, Maurie distinguished himself as an applied entomologist working at the Long Island Horticultural Research and Extension Center (formerly the L.I. Vegetable Research Farm) in Riverhead, succeeding Dr. Hugh Hockett in 1954. His research program emphasized improvement of insect control in vegetable, potato and floricultural crops. Maurie was a pioneering investigator of beneficial biological agents for insect control and one of the first U.S. scientists to evaluate use of the insect pathogens *Beauveria bassiana* for control of Colorado potato beetle and *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT) for corn insect control. BT is now widely used in agriculture. His research provided the necessary data to support labeling of novel chemicals to control important pests on Long Island and elsewhere. Two sabbatical leaves, at the University of Arizona and at the International Potato Institute in Lima, Peru, South America, were opportunities to gather both research and technical information useful to the agricultural industry of Long Island. Dr. Gerald Wilde, a former graduate student of his, remembers him as a fantastic mentor and teacher and credits Maurie's direction and support for a great deal of his own success and accomplishments.

In addition to his professional duties, he was a popular and active community leader. His interests, expertise and ability to recognize the importance of both sides of an issue were well received. Maurie was especially dedicated to service in Rotary International and a supporter of the Rotary Foundation. As a Paul Harris Fellow with 45 years of perfect attendance, he served as Club President and District Governor. He was also appointed by then-governor Hugh Carey to the New York State Advisory Council for Agriculture, and participated on many other Long Island committees concerned with land use and planning issues.

After retirement from Cornell, Maurie and his wife Marilyn moved to Bucyrus, Ohio where he continued his work with Rotary and other civic groups, 4H and Cooperative Extension. Maurie was devoted to his loving family and

is survived by his wife of 55 years, Marilyn; daughter, Valerie; sons Mark and Brad; and three grandchildren. His three children are also Cornell graduates.

His daughter, Valerie, has fond memories of his days with Cornell.

*“My brothers and I were introduced to Entomology at a very early age. We were reminiscing about how we would all jump into the old green pick-up and set off on a balmy summer’s evening to ‘help’ Pop check his light traps. We would wind through potato fields until we came to a remote corner of a field or woods to explore the contents of the previous night’s catch. We marveled that he knew the name of each species, knew which ones to keep of interest and which ones to leave for the raccoons. He taught us about mounting insects and of the importance of documenting each and every find. More than that, he taught us about the important part that each and every creature plays in nature and the delicate balance, which must never be disturbed. Pop was one of those rare individuals who never wanted to stop learning. Entomology was his passion but the world was his challenge. After retirement to Ohio, it took maybe two weeks before Pop was riding out on farm calls with the local Ohio State County Extensionist. He would call and away they would go, troubleshooting and helping out a farmer whose crops were being attacked. Pop was a kind and gentle man, a very loving and devoted father. His legacy is one of care and compassion.”*

*Daniel Gilrein, Joseph B. Siczka, Arthur A. Muka*