

Edgar Merrow Raffensperger

June 13, 1926 — May 2, 2003

Edgar Merrow Raffensperger, Professor Emeritus of Entomology passed away suddenly and peacefully at the home of his daughter, Catharine, in Urbandale, Iowa on May 2, 2003.

Ed was born and grew up in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania where in 1944 he volunteered for the U.S. Navy and served until the end of World War II. He attended Gettysburg College and later transferred to Pennsylvania State University where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree. He went on to earn his Doctorate in Entomology from the University of Wisconsin in 1955. Ed's career as an outstanding college teacher began when he was appointed as Assistant Professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in 1955. After six years on the VPI faculty, he joined the Cornell University Faculty of Entomology as Associate Professor and was promoted to full Professor in 1977.

Professor Raffensperger had an outstanding dedication to teaching and the excellence of his teaching achievements made him a nominee for the Edgerton Career Teaching Award. Ed received this award in 1991. His teaching excellence was also recognized as he received the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1989, and the Award of Merit for Innovative Teaching in 1988 from the Cornell chapter of Gamma Sigma Delta. Ed taught two major undergraduate courses, Applied Entomology and Cultural Entomology. The course "Cultural Entomology" was a pioneering course (the first in the U.S.) in integrating entomology with the cultural history and problems of mankind, and served as the model for similar courses across the U.S.

While the Edgerton Award is specifically for teaching, Dr. Raffensperger was also considerably involved in research and extension. He was a recognized authority on household insects, in particular the control of the extremely pestiferous cluster fly.

Ed was a member of the faculty in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences for 26 years. His top priority during this entire period was teaching and advising. His commitment to excellence was demonstrated in the way he conducted his lectures and laboratories and his innovative approaches to his subject matter. He used all of the new technology: computers, video, and graphics in his presentations. Interest was created also by his marvelous blend of stories, insect coffee cups, pictures, songs, sounds, etc.

Ed took his role as an adviser most seriously. He sought out the students with the biggest problems and, over the years, troubled students sought him out on the basis of his reputation for helpfulness. Ed was often invited by

Cornell coaches to talk to their athletes about how to improve their study habits. Many Cornellians, when they reflect back on their years in Ithaca, recall how Ed's concern and patience helped them.

Teaching material also was developed from international experience obtained during his sabbatical leaves. During 1968-69, he was a Visiting Scientist working in the Norwegian Agricultural Research Service and in 1985 he taught at Egerton College in Kenya, East Africa.

Ed was an all around guy. He enjoyed a good song and was an enthusiastic member of the City Club of Ithaca where his baritone harmony was enjoyed by all at the weekly Club meetings. He was a fly fisherman, a photographer, a gardener and a hunter and enjoyed all of the challenges.

Edgar Merrow Raffensperger was predeceased by his wife of 45 years, Shirley, who died in 1999. His daughter, Catharine of Urbandale, Iowa; sons, Thomas of Randolph, Vermont and Andrew of Rehrersburg, Pennsylvania; and five grandchildren, Andrea, Katya, Ian, Aiden and Katie, survive him. His sister, Anne of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, also survives him.

Richard Root, Donald Rutz, Arthur Muka