

George Samuel Butts

June 29, 1899 — January 25, 1975

George S. (Tim) Butts was an individual of whom it can truly be said that both Cornell University and the Ithaca community are better because of his having been with us. His many talents and interests enriched both town and gown in significant ways up to the time of his death. Retirement from the New York State College of Agriculture on July 31, 1959, after thirty-four years of service to Cornell, only enabled him to devote more time to community projects.

Born on a farm near Sodus, New York, Professor Butts joined the Department of Extension Teaching and Information (now Communication Arts) in 1925 after his graduation from the College of Agriculture. His first assignment was taking charge of the farm study courses—a program enrolling over sixty thousand persons in the years that followed—and then he accepted the responsibility for the distribution of all visual materials. His responsibilities later increased to include the distribution of experiment station and extension bulletins, editorial material issued by the college, and penalty mail covers used by cooperative extension personnel throughout New York State. He also directed the film library, edited service letters for farmers and homemakers, prepared tape recordings, and took an active part in improving radio and television presentations. His administrative talents were further recognized when he was invited to serve as acting head of his department in 1956-57.

His versatility and creativity found expression in the planning and construction of animated parts for the college's exhibits at the New York State Fair from the early 1930s until 1951. His creative talents at the drawing board were translated into reality in his garage shop, where Eggbert, the talking egg, and Sam, the vocal vegetable man—now of historical state fair fame—were assembled.

During his years at Cornell he was an active member of the American Association of Agricultural College Editors, Epsilon Sigma Phi (honorary extension service fraternity), and Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity. An accomplished violinist, he was a member of the University orchestra and other musical groups as a student and continued to enjoy playing in the orchestra for the twenty years following his graduation.

After his retirement he was one of the prime movers in organizing and setting up the drive for nonpublic funds to help the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. In the future untold numbers of students and staff will benefit from his efforts.

In the community he was a member of the Ithaca Rotary Club. Here he spearheaded the collection and distribution of food and money for the needy of Ithaca and also served as chairman of the annual Christmas Bureau Appeal.

Another of his community interests was the Tompkins County Public Library. He helped organize and administer the annual book sale, a program so successful that it has served as a pattern nationwide. Over the years he also contributed countless days working in his quiet and self-effacing way for the Tompkins County United Fund.

His leadership and organizational abilities and talents were further recognized when he was selected to serve as president of the Savage Club of Ithaca for several years. His musical talent was utilized in the club's annual Cornell reunion show. Countless alumni will long remember Tim and his cohort Allan Treman stopping the show with their performances on their "one string" instruments. Equally at home with a hammer and saw, his craftsmanship and woodworking abilities were the prime force in constructing the facilities for the new home of the club at the Village Green.

He will be long remembered for his many contributions to both Cornell University and the Ithaca community. His quiet and kindly humor, his sincere interest in his fellow man, and his willingness to help in many ways will be missed by all. He was a person about whom it can be truly said, "He had no enemies, only friends."

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Orilla Wright Butts, four sisters, and several nieces and nephews.

Russell D. Martin, William B. Ward, Chester H. Freeman