

# Edward W. Foss

*December 4, 1914 — January 28, 1988*

Edward Wilbur Foss, professor emeritus of agricultural engineering, died on January 28, 1988 at the age of 73. He retired from Cornell in 1980 after thirty-two years of active and dedicated service to Cornell.

Professor Foss was born in Laconia, New Hampshire and received a bachelor's degree from the University of New Hampshire. Ed earned a master's degree from Cornell in 1947. He was on the staff at the University of New Hampshire from 1942-45 and the University of Maine from 1945-1948. In 1948 he became professor of agricultural engineering at Cornell.

Ed came to Cornell to teach the farm shop and woodworking courses. In this capacity he served as teacher trainer for vocational agricultural teachers emphasizing teaching farm mechanics. He quickly broadened his interests and became involved with research and extension activities. His deep and abiding interest in forestry and the development of logging equipment for the small woodlot owner was paramount. He and his graduate students developed many labor saving devices to mechanize the woodlot operations. These included the logging arch, fence post sharpener, a small portable sawmill, firewood bundler and a combination log delimeter and debarker. Ed and forestry professor Fred Winch became involved in extending valuable information to the woodlot owners by preparing extension publications and conducting meetings, demonstrations and exhibits.

Professor Foss was given additional responsibilities in agricultural engineering extension when he was assigned the rural housing program. This was an appropriate program area for Ed because of his background in farm shop, forestry and in having had the experience of building several houses. Ed's boundless energy, dedication, foresight, and prolific mind produced many practical publications to help homeowners with sound housing decisions. When many of the responsibilities of the agricultural engineers in rural housing were transferred to the College of Human Ecology, Ed's interest turned to new programs. One of these areas was community resource development. This was uncharted territory for agricultural engineering and it was necessary to explore new ways of applying engineering knowledge to the development of resources in local communities. The development of recreational facilities was one area where Ed produced many educational publications and programs. Another area of Ed's interest was in the preparation and dissemination of educational materials for the civil defense and disaster relief programs.

Ed was also very active in the farm safety program with the New York State Rural Safety Council. One of his important programs with the Safety Council was to organize and conduct workshops for members of the central

Organization of Farm Mutual Cooperative Fire Insurance Companies. He developed and for several years taught one of the first agricultural engineering safety courses ever offered in the United States. He also served as a consultant in farm safety.

Professor Foss anticipated the problems with the disposal of sewage and other waste from small communities, recreational parks and camps, rural housing developments and with the disposal of solid wastes. He innovated new programs by developing program materials to help groups and community leaders in making important decisions with regard to these problems.

Another of his strong interests was youth development programs. He contributed greatly to the revision of the New York State 4-H Fire Safety Program and the initiation of a Farm Tractor Certification Program for youth.

Ed was always concerned with the improvement of community educational facilities. He served as an active member of the Ithaca Board of Education, the Board of Cooperative Educational Services, and was very effective in promoting economical and well designed building projects. Ithacans can be grateful to him for the tax money saved by his careful review of building ideas and plans.

Professor Foss was awarded lifetime membership in the American Society of Agricultural Engineers and was active for many years with the National Fire Protection Association, the National Safety Council and Alpha Zeta and Phi Sigma honorary societies. He was honored with several citations and commendations for his civic and professional services by New York State, Tompkins County and communities in Florida.

Ed was a very active, energetic and dedicated person and a prolific writer. He seemed to have a compulsion to be “involved”. His interests were very broad and he contributed to many program areas in agricultural extension with his drive, determination, expertise and inexhaustible energy. He was a tireless worker who always had plans for more work than he ever had time to complete. Above all Ed was an excellent co-worker, very active in civic affairs and an ideal Rotarian — service above self.

In retirement the Fosses moved to Florida to be near their son. Ed is survived by his wife of forty-nine years, Elizabeth Peabody; two daughters, Joan Elizabeth, and Linda Foss Ecker; and a son, John.

*Edward O. Eaton, Everett D. Markwardt, Wesley W. Gunkel*