

# Robert Lee Bruce

*April 14, 1925 — June 18, 1990*

Professor Robert Lee Bruce, a faculty member at Cornell since September 1961, died June 18, 1990 after a short illness. Over his three decades at Cornell he provided leadership to more than one hundred graduate students, serving as chairperson of more than 70 graduate study committees. His academic leadership in the area of adult and extension education, evaluation and program development formed the basis for his teaching career. The word mentor best describes him. He was more than an excellent teacher; he was a tutor, an advisor, one who unlocked the ability to learn in students from cultures all around the world. His knowledge of cultures and history was extensive and enhanced by visiting professorships at the University of Reading, England (1967-68, 1989), at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada (1975), at University Pertanian Malaysia (1982-83), and at the University of British Columbia at Vancouver (1983).

As a university citizen he was a faculty fellow for Ecology House and served on numerous university committees. His service to his department (Education, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences) was described by colleagues as that of a valued team member whose judgement, sagacity, and wisdom were sought after. His “just plain horse-sense,” his ability to face crises and take charge when necessary drew people to him as a trusted colleague. He served as graduate field representative for the department from 1984-86 and as coordinator of the Adult, Extension, and Continuing Education Program.

That down-to-earth quality, a rare and wonderful find in academic circles, came from his farm boyhood in Nebraska where he was born April 14, 1925. After service in World War II as an infantry sergeant in the European Theater of Operations, he received his B.S. degree from the University of Nebraska. He was a county extension agent in Nebraska before receiving his M.S. degree from Cornell in 1951. For the next nine years he was at the University of Maryland, first as publications editor and later as assistant state leader for agricultural extension. He received his Ph.D. degree from Cornell in 1960.

Professor Bruce served on the board of trustees of Tompkins Cortland Community College for ten years. He strongly believed in the community college concept—the need to translate the finding of scholars to the workers of our society. The president of the College, Dr. Edwardo Marti stated: “His stewardship transcended budget difficulties, personal viewpoints, or political feelings. His sharply focused mind was a welcome presence....”

Professor Bruce's community service also included five years as a member of the Tompkins County Board of Representatives, as a member of the Tompkins County Board of Mental Health, and as an elder of the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca.

Professor Bruce and his wife, Charlotte, opened their home to students on a regular basis. Their genuine interest in others, their sense of humor, love of food and its growing and preparation provided an informal setting for good companionship and stimulating conversation. His talents also included photography and Chinese brush painting.

Professor Bruce's love of language and literature provided him strength during his illness. He selected this Tennyson quotation for the memorial services held following his death.

“Our little systems have their days;  
They have their day and ceased to be;  
They are but broken lights of thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

In addition to his wife, Professor Bruce is also survived by his son, Thomas. A daughter, Ann Lynn, died in 1970.

*Joseph P. Bail, Richard E. Ripple, Jane W. McGonigal*