



CORNELL CHRONICLE

May 29, 2008

Trustee emeritus, former State Fair director Bernie Potter dies at 86

By Bill Steele

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Cornell trustee emeritus Bernard W. "Bernie" Potter died May 25 at age 86, leaving a legacy of service to Cornell and New York agriculture and a wide array of mostly Cornell-affiliated friends and relatives.

Born March 28, 1922, in Truxton, N.Y., he earned a B.S. from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 1943 and remained an avid supporter of Cornell, serving on numerous committees, including the Agriculture and Life Sciences Advisory Council. He was a Cornell trustee for 10 years and was named trustee emeritus in 1991.

As a member of the Board of Trustees Potter served on the Land Grant and Statutory College Affairs Committee from 1981 through 1993, and was vice chair of the committee from 1981 to 1991. His work on the committee included mobilization of external stakeholder groups, such as the New York State Farm Bureau, to support the needs of the contract colleges and Cornell at state and federal levels. His network of contacts in the agricultural industry, upstate communities, and local and state government was extensive, and he drew on it successfully in service to Cornell. He particularly championed the New York State Rural Schools program, which he believed to be key to upstate economic development and retention of a vigorous agriculture sector in New York.

The Potter family owned and operated Potter Farms, a registered Holstein dairy, from 1943 to 1985. Potter was named U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce Young Farmer of the Year in 1958. He served as president of the American Dairy Association and Dairy Council of New York (1965-67), director of the New York State Fair (1967-73), director of the New York State Farm Bureau and a member of the National Advisory Committee of the American Farm Bureau Federation. He was president of the New York State Agricultural Society in 1977-78.

Also active in local politics, Potter was supervisor for the town of Truxton from 1960 to 1967 and was chair of the Cortland County Board of Supervisors in 1966.

Potter is survived by his wife of more than 63 years, Margaret Smith Potter '43 of Truxton, children and extended family.

A memorial service will be at 10 a.m., May 31, at the Truxton United Methodist Church, Route 13, Truxton, N.Y. Calling hours will be 4-7 p.m., May 29, at Wright-Beard Funeral Home, 9 Lincoln Ave., Cortland, N.Y.

Contributions in his memory can be made to the Truxton United Methodist Church, or to Cornell University, Wilburn & Florence Potter Scholarship, P.O. Box 2600, Ithaca, NY 14851.

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