

Robert Francis Holland

September 21, 1908 — January 16, 2000

Robert F. Holland was born on a dairy and fruit farm near Holley, New York. He came to Cornell in 1932 and enrolled in the College of Engineering. At that time, he was working for a local retail dairy processor and became interested in Dairy Science. This led him to transfer to the College of Agriculture, where he earned his undergraduate degree. After graduation, he became a candidate for a Doctorate in Dairy Science.

During his time as a graduate student, he was an Instructor in the Basic Dairy Science course, working in association with Professors Paul Sharp and B. L. Herrington. He spent the last year of graduate work at the Geneva Experiment Station under Professor Dahlberg and upon receiving his degree, joined the Cherry Burrell Corporation, a manufacturer of dairy processing equipment. Shortly thereafter, he went to the Grange League Federation (GLF – now Agway) as a Director of Chemical Research to develop a new line of chemical products.

In 1944, Dr. James Sherman, long-time head of Dairy Science, invited Holland to return to Cornell to take over the Extension duties, administrative management of the dairy plant and teach a course in market milk. He succeeded Professor Sherman as head of the department in 1954 and held that position for 18 years until his retirement in 1973. It became his responsibility to shepherd a diverse faculty through changes in name and activities from Dairy Industry to Dairy and Food Science, and finally to Food Science.

His experience in the Engineering College and his expertise in Dairy Science led him into the engineering phase of the dairy industry. He had a strong hand in the development and acceptance of high temperature pasteurization, homogenization and packaging of milk and dairy products. He cooperated in the design of the modern milk plate heat exchangers and deserves much of the credit for developing “clean-in-place” systems for washing and sanitizing dairy equipment – systems which are currently in place in every modern milk and food processing plant.

Dr. Holland’s leadership in extension resulted in fundamental changes in the method of providing farmers, processors and plant operators expert assistance as they consolidated and modernized. He was very instrumental in organizing the milk inspectors, the plant operators and related organizations serving the dairy industry into the New York State Association of Milk and Food Sanitarians (NYSAMFS), a vibrant group of several hundred professionals working in the food industry. He was a past president of that organization and was awarded its highest honor, the Emmet R. Gauhn Memorial Award in 1975. A lasting legacy of his administration was the

merging of the Annual Cornell Dairy Conference with the Annual Convention of the NY State Association of Milk and Food Sanitarians – a strong and lasting force in the dairy and food industry today.

Bob, as he was affectionately known, was a master of morale. His office door was always open and so was his mind. He appreciated initiative, innovation and enthusiasm and always exhibited a ready wit, but “he did not suffer fools gladly.”

He not only aided and abetted the scientific production of his compatriots and staff, but he encouraged (almost insisted) on social and professional contact inside and outside the department. The annual fishing trips to Bob’s Lake (no relation) brought the male faculty and staffs together in a “retreat” like atmosphere. The Dairy wives group, chaired by his wife, Ruth, made our department a harmonious unit. If there were feuds in the department, they were not apparent. He instigated twice weekly lunches with students and staff that did much to bring the department together and focus the many missions.

In 1957, Bob spent a sabbatical year on an International Cooperation Administration appointment in Salonika, Greece. Later, in 1964, he established a dairy department at Edgerton College in Kenya. He spent a final sabbatical in 1972-73 writing and studying.

Bob was married to Ruth McCargo while he was still a graduate student. They raised three boys and one girl. He was active in community affairs; a long time school board member, an active Rotarian, and an enthusiastic member of the City Club of Ithaca, where he presided at the wine table until a week before his death.

He truly loved life. He enjoyed his family, cars, cameras, guns, growing orchids, making wine, fishing and hunting, his Canadian camp, a good laugh and above all, his interaction with people. He made major contributions to Cornell, to his community and to his friends. Characteristically, when he knew that his end was near, he chose to leave us with dignity and on his own terms, refusing any “extraordinary measures.”

Bob leaves a legacy to his many friends. He was, above all, a real human being who enriched the lives of all that knew him.

W. Frank Shipe, James C. White, David K. Bandler