

Marion C. Pfund

November 16, 1897 — January 5, 2000

Dr. Marion C. Pfund came to Cornell in 1928 as an Acting Assistant Professor of Foods and Nutrition, became an Assistant Professor in 1929 and was named a full Professor of Foods and Nutrition in 1933. She retired from Cornell's College of Home Economics in 1953, but was not granted Emerita status because of a Trustees ruling that only professors who had attained the age of 60 could be granted that title. More than forty years later, in 1992, with a changed policy, she was granted the title of Professor Emerita.

Professor Pfund received her B.S. degree from Simmons College in 1919. During her sophomore year, she marched with other home economics classmates in a suffragette parade, carrying a "Votes for Women" sign. The summer after her junior year, she did war service work and ran the Bergenfield, New Jersey Food Administration Office by herself. She taught at Vassar while studying for a Master's degree, which she received in 1921. She continued to teach at Vassar while doing her Doctoral work in Organic Chemistry at Yale, and in 1927-28, she was Research Librarian and Assistant to the Chief Chemist of Calco Chemical Company.

Professor Pfund taught a 10-credit Food Chemistry course that the college's students recall as extremely tough, but one which later gave them a competitive edge in the food industry. Former student, Elodie Mayer Huffman, '48 wrote: "I had such great respect for her during my undergraduate years and have felt her influence in my professional life."

She was known for her research on apples, potatoes and custards. She participated in the establishment of the nutritional standard for bread. She authored a textbook, *Chemistry and Food Preparation*, and for several years, she wrote the sections on food technology for *Encyclopedia Britannica*. She also directed a movie on home canning.

Her hospitality for students was generous; she regularly invited students to her home for dinner. Her interest in foreign students was chronicled by an Assistant to the Dean of the College of Home Economics, Caroline Morton:

"Miss Pfund's interest in foreign students on this campus, her work with the Cosmopolitan Club, and her interest in international relations is of long standing. She works well with foreign students, and they come to her frequently with their problems. I have seen her spend hours with a foreign student who was having difficulty in her course. I know of no one on our staff who has done more to foster good international relationships than Miss Pfund."

Her interest in international travel was well known. In 1963, she and fellow Professors Beulah Blackmore and Sarah Boswick, took a six-month sabbatical and toured the world: Japan, China, Singapore, the Philippines, Sumatra,

Hong Kong, Ceylon, Bali, Java, India, and Egypt. They traveled by Tonga, dandy, steamship, train, airplane and rickshaw. They sent reports back to the faculty, which revealed Miss Pfund's keen sense of humor. She wrote on a post card from Egypt with the three women on camels and a pyramid in the background: "The picture shouts altogether too loud to need further comment. To be really good, this picture should have been taken while we were trying to mount or dismount."

She was a member and office holder of many scientific, professional and honor societies. She was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Membership in other professional organizations included the American Association of University Professors, the American Chemical Society, the American Home Economics Association, and the Institute of Food Technologists. Her membership in honor societies included Iota Sigma Pi, Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma Delta Epsilon and Sigma Xi.

With Professor Pfund's retirement from Cornell in 1953, she transferred the responsibility of the 10-credit Food Chemistry course to her colleague, Dr. Nell Mondy, who she had carefully groomed for the position. She acknowledged the help of Dr. Mondy in the writing of her book entitled, *Chemistry and Food Preparation*. This book for many years was used in the teaching of the course.

Dr. Mondy recalls many interesting and enjoyable occasions shared with Professor Pfund, the perfectionist. The two chemists shared much in common and worked diligently to make certain that all the teaching assistants in the multiple-section food chemistry course were adequately trained in both chemistry and food science. Professor Pfund, whose early childhood was spent in Boston, had a distinct Bostonian accent and a special fondness for seafood. Dr. Mondy, from Texas, did not share this enthusiasm for seafood, so Professor Pfund decided to do something about it. She invited Dr. Mondy and other faculty to dinner, where she proceeded to serve only lobster. She believed that anyone teaching food chemistry should like all foods, and thus made her opinion clear.

Her interest in students was well known, and she was especially careful to train them in scientific writing. One of her graduate students, after numerous revisions of her thesis, handed it back to Professor Pfund and stated, "You may change the date of my birthday if you wish." This brought much laughter to all including Professor Pfund, for the student had made her point and Professor Pfund became less demanding.

With Miss Pfund's retirement from Cornell, she became a Co-Dean of a new College of Family Living at Brigham Young University from which she retired in 1958. She then became Chairman of the Department of Home Economics at San Jose State University and retired from there as Professor Emerita in 1965. In her late nineties,

Miss Pfund wrote:

“Much of the academic revolution in the past few decades has been positive, but at too many universities—and almost all secondary schools—the changes have excluded family as a subject of study. We now have millions of high school and college graduates who know next to nothing about taking care of a family. They haven’t been taught the fundamentals of nutrition, child development, family dynamics, consumer finance—all essential to bringing up healthy and stable children. And at the same time, many haven’t had the beneficial role models that children in past generations did.”

For many years following her retirement, she continued to visit her friends in Ithaca. She especially enjoyed visits with a colleague, Frances Johnston, who owned a cottage on Cayuga Lake where Professor Pfund could enjoy swimming every day. Throughout her long life, she never lost her fondness of swimming. On her 100th birthday, she posed for a photo in her bright blue swimsuit and sent the photo to Dr. Mondy.

Pfund did not own a car while at Cornell and walked to campus. Years later, while living in California and approaching the age of 100, she decided she needed an identification card since she had no driver’s license for identification. She wrote Dr. Mondy that she had purchased the card, which was good until 2002, and that she didn’t expect to lose a penny of it. She retained her wonderful sense of humor until the end.

Both of the writers of this statement kept up with Miss Pfund: Professor Emerita Mondy over all the years following her retirement from Cornell, and Dean Emerita Firebaugh during her tenure as dean. During the celebratory luncheon held after Miss Pfund was named Professor Emerita, with a warm spirit she elucidated and corrected the statement written about her. At that time she was still swimming each day, and was active in St. James by the Sea Episcopal Church in La Jolla, California where she lived in a retirement complex. Seeing her the day before her 102nd birthday, she had a warm smile of welcome for the Firebaughs and the assistance of a long time and close friend, Doris Wood. She wanted to cross three centuries in her life and she accomplished that. She leaves a legacy of a life oriented to education and committed to improving the quality of life. To quote the Priest at a memorial service, “The truth is that she never stopped thinking of other people.”

Nell Mondy, Francille M. Firebaugh