

Bernard E. Dethier

June 5, 1926 — February 22, 1995

Bernie Dethier was for many years the leader of the meteorology group in the Department of Agronomy. Through his leadership, meteorology at Cornell grew from a one-person operation to a vital, nationally recognized program. In 1983, he established the Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell and served as its Director until his retirement in 1988. The Center serves as a unique resource of climate data and applied climate information for Cornell researchers as well as for businesses, government agencies, and citizens throughout twelve northeastern states.

Born in Boston, Bernie earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in meteorology from the California Institute of Technology and a Ph.D. degree in geography from the Johns Hopkins University. Bernie joined the Cornell faculty as an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Climatology in 1958. He was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in 1962 and to Professor in 1969. Prior to his employment by Cornell, Bernie held faculty positions at Nazareth College in Michigan and at Morgan State College in Maryland. He was also employed as Director of Climatology with a private weather service in California and served as an aerology officer in the United States Navy from 1952-54.

When he arrived in 1958, Bernie *was* the meteorology program at Cornell, serving the entire university with instruction, research and public service in all aspects of atmospheric science. The meteorology program grew in size and importance under Bernie's leadership. His entrepreneurial spirit and outgoing personality well suited him for developing a more substantial academic program. By the mid-1960s, Bernie was successful in obtaining an additional faculty position in meteorology to meet growing student interest and enrollment in meteorology courses. In the early 1970s, he greatly expanded the meteorology curriculum to give undergraduates the training necessary to meet requirements for professional employment in the field. This resulted in a surge in enrollment and led to the addition of a third faculty member to the meteorology program. By the time of Bernie's retirement, the program consisted of four faculty members, a half-dozen support staff, and over forty undergraduate majors. He is remembered for his encouragement and support of younger colleagues and for promoting a harmonious and cooperative work environment for everyone involved with the meteorology program.

Bernie taught the introductory course in meteorology for many years as well as courses in climatology, tropical meteorology, and air pollution. The introductory course was very popular with a typical enrollment of 75 to 100

students. Several thousand Cornell undergraduates received their introduction to meteorological phenomena and processes in this course and it inspired many to take up meteorology as a major and career.

Cornell's atmospheric science program was lifted to regional and national prominence through Bernie's efforts in establishing the Northeast Regional Climate Center. The Center's data resources, service, outreach, and research activities complement and enhance the teaching and research programs of the department. Bernie was appointed State Climatologist for New York in 1979 and, upon his retirement to Blue Hill, Maine, he assumed the position of State Climatologist for Maine—a position he held until his death. He was an active member and past president of the American Association of State Climatologists, a Fellow and professional member of the American Meteorological Society as well as a member of Sigma Xi.

Bernie's research focused primarily on the use of climate data and information to address problems in the field of agriculture. Much of his work was done in cooperation with colleagues in the department and at many other institutions in the Northeast and throughout the nation. These studies most often involved organizing, analyzing and summarizing large quantities of weather observations. In the early 1970s, he organized and led a large, multi-disciplinary group of scientists in a pioneering research project to explore the potential of satellite observations in monitoring the phenological development of crops, rangeland, and forests on a continental scale. Many of the publications resulting from his work are widely used to this day.

You may have wondered why only the top floor of Bradfield Hall has windows. Credit is due to Bernie Dethier. Bernie was fond of relating a tale of his meeting with the architect during the building's planning stages and his insisting that meteorologists had to have a clear, unobstructed view of the sky in order to observe and forecast the weather. His arguments were obviously persuasive, and the faculty and staff of the atmospheric science group as well as thousands of campus visitors each year enjoy the splendid views of the campus and Cayuga Lake afforded by Bernie's windows.

Robert F. Lucey, Madison J. Wright, Warren W. Knapp