

Bernice Margaret Scott

August 21, 1919 — March 26, 1985

Professor Scott was a native of Steubenville, Jefferson County, Ohio.

Upon graduation from Wintersville High School in 1936, she entered Capital University, in Columbus, Ohio, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in music in 1941. From 1942 to 1944 she taught music in the public schools of eastern Ohio. In 1945 she became the public relations director for the Jefferson County Farm Bureau and in 1948 joined the Agricultural Extension Service of West Virginia. The following year she accepted the position of extension specialist in recreation leadership and leisure education at Cornell. Scotty's recognized competence in music and her ability to work with youth were important considerations in her initial appointment as an instructor in 1949. In 1951, when extension specialists were placed in academic departments, Scotty was invited to join the Department of Rural Sociology. She was appointed assistant professor in 1954 and associate professor in 1961.

Scotty's educational philosophy is summarized in one sentence, taken from her vast writings of teaching materials: "Through leisure education an individual becomes capable of choosing those activities which contribute to the achievement of purposes, the satisfaction of needs, and enhancement of the quality of life." Scotty inspired thousands of youth leaders across New York State when they attended her classes and workshops in social recreation, crafts, performing arts, camping and outdoor education, and cultural heritage and the 4-H Leadership Laboratory, which she established in 1965.

The pinnacle of her achievements came perhaps in recent years, when she launched a cultural heritage program based on history, folklife, and folklore of New York State. The educational emphasis was on personal development through greater knowledge and understanding of one's own heritage, one's community, or one's region of the state. The program was financed in part by the New York State Council on the Arts.

For many years Scotty helped organize and conduct management conferences for leaders of various youth agencies responsible for developing educational programs and implementing operational standards for camping. It has been said that through her educational programs for youth she developed more contacts with New York State residents than any other extension specialist. Her publications on recreation leadership and leisure education often had press runs of ten to twenty thousand.

In 1978 the New York State Association of Cooperative Extension 4-H Agents honored Scotty with the Award of Merit for leadership at state and national levels in camping, youth leadership development, and innovative approaches to the expressive arts. Again, in 1983, the same organization honored her by including her programs among those eligible for support from the New York State 4-H Foundation Leadership Development Fund. This is an ongoing fund to provide financial support for excellence in youth leadership programs.

Throughout a career extending over three decades Scotty kept abreast of innovations in her field through advanced study. In 1954 she received an M.A. degree from Columbia University Teachers College. She also studied at the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Maryland, the University of Illinois, and the Scandinavian Seminar for Cultural Studies in Sweden.

Scotty also served the University community through membership on the Faculty Council of Representatives and the Physical Education Committee. She was a member of the Agricultural Extension Faculty Committee. Her organizational affiliations included the National 4-H Extension Leisure Education Committee, the National Recreation and Park Association, the New York State Recreation Society, the New York State Camping Association, and the American Camping Association. The American Camping Association presented her with a leadership award in 1985.

Scotty retired May 1, 1984, from the Department of Rural Sociology with the title of professor emerita. At a retirement party she learned of the establishment of the Bernice Scott Fund, to which hundreds of her friends and colleagues have contributed as an expression of support for her philosophy and work with youth. She was also honored on that occasion by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; one of the young trees on the upper quadrangle of the campus bears her name as a symbol of the high esteem in which she will long be held.

Bernice M. Scott is buried back home in Steubenville, Ohio, at Fort Steuben Burial Estates. She is survived by two sisters and one brother: Mary Scott Riddle, of Mt. Sterling, Ohio; Emma Scott Christian, of Columbus, Ohio; and John E. Scott, of Kokomo, Indiana.

A remembrance service was conducted June 27, 1985, at the Anabel Taylor Chapel on campus. This coincided with the annual New York State 4-H Congress. In years past on such occasions, Scotty could be found either onstage in Bailey Hall, coaxing the last notes of musical talent from one thousand assembled 4-H'ers, or backstage, watching teenage music leaders conducting their own songfest.

Olaf F. Larson, James C. Preston, Gordon J. Cummings