

Margaret Hutchins

October 24, 1893 — February 24, 1992

Born in Palmyra, New York, Margaret Hutchins died, after a short illness, in Rochester, New York at the age of ninety-eight. She had been a member of the Cornell faculty for twenty-two years prior to her retirement. Professor Hutchins received her undergraduate education at the Rochester Mechanics Institute (now Rochester Institute of Technology). Before going to Columbia University to study for a Master's degree, she ran a dressmaking business where she could indulge her love of beautiful fabrics and her skill in clothing design. This gift never left her and to the end of her life she enjoyed beautiful colors and designs.

Professor Hutchins started her academic career as a faculty member in the Department of Home Economics at Russell Sage College in Troy, New York. Subsequently, she supervised the Home Economics program in the secondary schools of Syracuse, New York. Later she joined the New York State Department of Education as a supervisor in the statewide program of Home Economics in elementary and secondary schools.

She came to Cornell in 1935 as an Instructor of Home Economics Education in the Rural Education Department of the College of Agriculture; she also assumed responsibility for supervising the Home Economics program in the Ithaca city school system. In 1943 she was granted a Cornell Ph.D. in the field of Education with minors in Psychology and Economics of the Household. She was a member of the honorary societies of Pi Lambda Theta and Phi Kappa Phi.

In 1946 a Department of Home Economics Education was established in the College of Home Economics (now the College of Human Ecology) and Dr. Hutchins was appointed Professor and Chairman. She held this position until her retirement in 1957.

The years between 1946-57 were a time of rapid development. In addition to the programs for undergraduate preparation of teachers and extension agents, the graduate program increased considerably. Women were returning from service in World War II ready to study for an advanced degree. Foreign students were once more able to travel freely from their own countries and U.S. nationals came from many states including Hawaii.

Professor Hutchins was well inbred in the Cornell tradition and worked hard to insure that students should understand the freedom and responsibility provided at graduate level for individual program and thesis development. She was patient with those students who either were at a loss for a thesis topic or who underestimated

the magnitude of what they hoped to develop. Rarely imposing her own preference she was able to guide them to a suitable choice through friendly discussion and a realistic approach to the problem.

Students remember Margaret's interest and concern for their welfare. One student remembers her entrance interview and feeling apprehensive about her financial status. She was not only assured of an assistantship but arrangements were made for her to interview for a dormitory counsellor's job. Others remember the enjoyable gathering in Miss Hutchins' apartment where tea, sherry and cheese straws were invariably the refreshments offered! For many years she maintained contact with past students and was able to visit several in the U.S.A. and Europe during her frequent travels after her retirement.

Professor Hutchins was appreciated by faculty in her department and elsewhere on campus for her skills as a mediator and in achieving consensus in group discussions. She rarely took an adversarial position supporting others when she could, yet knowing when to accept a situation which appeared inevitable. One of her most endearing gifts was her zest for life and her active sense of humor. She could be relied upon to lighten an occasion even when circumstances were difficult. Her jokes were always to the point particularly when told against herself.

During her working years she maintained a close relationship with the Bureau of Home Economics of the New York State Education Department. She was a valued adviser and consultant on program development particularly in the area of in-service education. Many group conferences and short courses throughout the state were developed at her instigation. She was also a leader in the North East Interstate Conferences organized by the U.S. Office of Education. In addition, besides a substantial summer session program, she would frequently organize short courses for supervisors and administrators throughout the country.

After her retirement in 1957, Margaret remained in Ithaca accompanied first by her cousin Margaret Stevens and then by her sister, Ruth. During this period she had time to devote to her love for travel and for reading, an important part of her life. She was also an active participant in the programs of her church.

In 1975, Margaret moved to Rochester to be nearer to her brother, Irving, and his family. She kept close contact with her friends in Ithaca as well as becoming involved in many activities in Rochester. In 1985, she received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the College of Applied Science and Technology,

Margaret Hutchins will be remembered as a loving and compassionate human being with a warm sense of humor; she was a true professional in her work and a wise administrator.