

H. Darkes Albright

July 24, 1907 — August 12, 1988

Darkes Albright was born into the small Pennsylvania community of Lebanon Valley to Harry J. and Bertha Albright. He was given his father's first name, Harry, and his mother's family name, Darkes, though as an adult he reduced the first to "H." and became known to all as "Darkes." He was educated in Lebanon schools through an A.B. at Lebanon Valley College in 1928, then came to Cornell to take an A.M. in 1931 and a Ph.D. in 1935. His teaching career began at Iowa State Teachers College in the years from 1934 to 1936, after which he accepted the offer of his teacher and friend Alexander Drummond to return to Cornell and take up the career that continued to his retirement in 1971.

During the years of Darkes' tenure as a senior figure in the then Department of Speech and Drama he was a dominant force in the theatrical life of the University. Always faithful to Drummond's vision of academic theatre and theatre studies in an academic context, he and the departments he led stressed work and study that drew students, and most of them undergraduates, from all over the University. It was certainly in large part his achievement that the corridors of Goldwin Smith and, later, Lincoln Hall were alive in that time with student interest in drama. Of course the play productions during those years reflected both the advantages and disadvantages of student actors and backstage workers. But they were always stamped by the quality of amateurs in the best sense of that tradition, of persons who loved what they were doing, and at their best they were miraculously fine.

In other respects more visible to the world outside Cornell, Darkes was seen as a preeminent professional. His publications consisted of *Working Up a Part* (1947), a manual for beginning actors, the still durable *Principles of Theatre Art* (1955) with Lee Mitchell and William Halstead, and a translation of Adolph Appia's *The Work of Living Art* (1960). He edited *The Story of Meininger* (1963), *Memories of the Theatre Libre* (1964), and Meyerhold's *Theatre of the Grotesque* (1971), and he served as an associate editor of the *Educational Theatre Journal* from 1952-1954. He was a member and for a time the president of the American Theatre Association.

But for those who worked with him at Cornell it is the extremely collegial, vigorously good-humored, extraordinarily dedicated Darkes who is primarily remembered. Darkes Albright had an unusually close relation to students; he cared about them deeply, and they knew it. Rare indeed was the tireless attention he gave to graduate students whose talents were better suited to acting or directing than to writing their dissertations. Rarer still was his unflagging devotion to a cross-fertilization between the art of theatre and the rigors of theatre studies. His warmth, concern,

and finely tuned sense of responsibility were in fact evident in everything he did: in his and his wife's involvement for many years in the Coop Food Store, one of the city's most popular and successful community ventures, in their later work with McGraw House, and in his continuing work after retirement with senior citizens.

These activities and the qualities they imply were in some sense extensions of his life with his family. From the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Nelson in 1936 until his death, his center was his family. From that nucleus, characteristically, he reached out—to the community in his many community activities, to students and colleagues in classes, rehearsals, supper parties, and picnics—all facets of a life he never would have lived differently. Although his last years were darkened by Elizabeth's death in 1985, and then his son Stephen's at age 44 in 1987, he continued to be comforted by the encouragement of others through their readings and visitations. He is survived by a daughter, Judith Gaetani of Binghamton; a grandson, James; and three step-grandchildren, Joseph, John, and Margaret.

Don Fredericksen, Marvin Carlson, Anthony Caputi