

Lowell Clem Cunningham

August 3, 1903 — February 20, 1983

Professor Emeritus Lowell C. Cunningham died at the Broadmead Retirement Home, Cockeysville, Maryland, February 20, 1983. The Cunninghams had moved from Ithaca to Broadmead in 1980, after fifty years of active and productive association with Cornell University and the Ithaca community.

Lowell C. Cunningham was reared on a livestock and grain farm in Vermilion County, Illinois. He received the Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture in 1926 and the Master of Science degree with a major concentration in animal husbandry in 1927 from the University of Illinois. His professional career started in LaSalle County, Illinois, where he was an assistant agricultural agent from 1927 to 1930.

In 1930 L. C. Cunningham entered the Graduate School at Cornell University as a graduate assistant in the Department of Agricultural Economics. In 1932 he was appointed an extension instructor and embarked upon an economic study of New York dairy farming, which proved to be the basis for his distinguished career as a dairy economist. He received his doctorate from Cornell in February 1934.

In July 1934 Dr. Cunningham was appointed assistant professor of farm management with primary responsibilities in extension teaching. This was the beginning of a thirty-five-year career as a Cornell professor concentrating on the economic problems of the dairy industry. His work in the early years focused on applied research and extension work with dairy farmers. In the later years he also supervised graduate students and taught an advanced course in farm management. He retired June 30, 1969, and was made an emeritus professor.

The major thrust of Professor Cunningham's work was determining the factors that affect the successful management and operation of dairy farms and the effective use of associated agricultural resources. His research was based on the collection of data from individual dairy farmers in order to determine the factors affecting costs and returns in producing milk. His economic studies were used extensively in developing milk-pricing systems in New York and elsewhere, and he was often called to present testimony and economic information at public hearings. The findings from his research also provided the basis for developing an index of the costs of dairy farming that continues to be used as an important economic indicator.

His early experience as an extension agent gave Professor Cunningham an excellent understanding of cooperative extension and provided the basis for working closely with extension agents throughout his career. He developed

a strong commitment to the importance of coordinating research and extension efforts. Agents were involved in the early stages of planning his applied research studies. He had an equally strong commitment to getting research results to agents, teachers, and farmers promptly. Plans for extending the results were incorporated in his research project statements.

Professor Cunningham was alert to the need of extension agents, teachers of agriculture, and agribusinessmen to obtain current economic data and to improve their understanding of economic issues. He worked closely with these groups to provide teaching materials and in-service education. He was recognized for these efforts in 1968, when the Association of Teachers of Agriculture made him an honorary life member, "in appreciation of the service, cooperation, and assistance rendered to the association." His annual dairy outlook statements were widely used and much appreciated by both agricultural professionals and farmers.

With his highly integrated research and extension program, Professor Cunningham was requested to serve on many state and regional committees. He served on milk-pricing committees for the New York milkshed, was a longtime member of the College Feed Survey Committee of the commercial feed industry, served on the Northeast Regional Farm Management Research Committee, and was active on the College Interdepartmental Dairy Industry Committee for many years. On committees he was especially adept in challenging both old and new ideas, thus adding much to the soundness of decisions made.

Preparing clear, concise economic articles and publications was one of Dr. Cunningham's outstanding talents. He coauthored a book, published numerous research and extension bulletins, and authored more than one hundred articles in professional journals and trade magazines. He was an effective communicator on radio and television. His best known bulletin was *Commercial Dairy Farming in New York*, for which he received a national blue award from the American Association of Agricultural College Editors.

Tours to farms and business firms were used as part of the teaching methods both in Professor Cunningham's extension programs and in his classes. He placed great emphasis on the management experiences of the farmers and the direct interchange with them and students. His tours were carefully planned and organized, included appropriate reference data, and provided for farmer and student interaction; and events were held to a precise schedule. These tours were enjoyed and appreciated by all who participated.

Retirement did not bring an end to Dr. Cunningham's career. He held a Fulbright lectureship in Trinidad for one year, accepted several short-term assignments abroad, and hosted visitors and conducted tours for the

International Agriculture Program in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences until 1980, when he left the Cornell community.

Lou Cunningham was a person with great drive, energy, and enthusiasm; high standards of performance; and a dedication to serving mankind. He was committed to the seeking out of all relevant facts and then presenting and defending them in the best way he knew how. His impact on the dairy industry and the agriculture of New York State and the nation will be felt for a long time.

In addition to his productivity as a professor of farm management, Lou Cunningham found time for nonprofessorial activities. His family, home, and garden ranked high among his priorities. He swam regularly as a health measure, was an avid bridge player, enjoyed athletic events, and was active in church and community affairs. His nearly fourscore years were full and productive, bringing enrichment to his family, friends, colleagues, and mankind.

He is survived by his wife, Marie Crouch Cunningham, who was a loyal helpmate and supporter in all his professional activities for nearly fifty years, and by their three sons, Jay, Robert, and Lynn, all graduates of Cornell.

George J. Conneman, Bernard F. Stanton, C. Arthur Bratton