

Charles I. Sayles

July 17, 1903 — January 9, 1991

This past year the Hotel School lost a most loyal friend, former faculty member, and alumnus, Charles I. Sayles. He was a member of one of the first graduating classes of the newfound hotel program and returned, in 1931, to spend almost 35 years on the faculty.

Chuck Sayles was born in Watertown, New York, into a family of New York educators and innkeepers. His father was president of the State Teachers College in Albany and, during the summer months, operated the Star Lake Inn in the Adirondacks. Chuck embraced these family traditions; he recalled taking the Inn's horse and wagon to the train station at Indian Lake, greeting summer guests arriving from New York, and carrying their trunks back to the lodge.

Graduating from Colgate University in 1924, Chuck then attended the Alliance Francaise in Paris before returning to the States where he received a second Bachelor's degree from the Department of Hotel Management (then in the School of Home Economics) in 1926. At that time, the hotel program was directed from a closet under the stairs in Roberts Hall. Chuck describes these humble beginnings of the School of Hotel Administration in his last work, *The Closet Under the Stairs* (1989). He later earned a Master's degree in electrical engineering from Cornell in 1937.

Chuck Sayles became an instructor in industrial engineering at the Hotel School in 1931. In those early years he would arrive back from the Adirondacks in late September, only a day or two before the fall term. He loved the outdoors and was an avid hunter and fisherman. A charter member of the Cayuga Heights Fire Department, the back of Chuck's car invariably held a combination of fishing and fire gear.

In his office at Cornell, Chuck loved to point out to the Home Economics dean the framed letter from his wife, "Ted", announcing her resignation from the faculty at the time of their marriage. Their nearly fifty years together produced three children, Harriet, John, and Margaret. Chuck's second wife, Janet E. Sayles, of Ithaca, and his son, John, survive.

Chuck created an impressive legacy at the Hotel School. He maintained, out of his own pocket, a personal loan fund for students, lending amounts up to \$100 as the need arose. He kept a ledger of names and amounts and, when settled, would tear out the appropriate page and return it to the student. No one ever failed to repay a debt.

Chuck taught courses in construction, property management, and electrical engineering to two generations of Cornell hoteliers. His inquisitiveness for education—and for the practicality of innkeeping—continued throughout his career. In the 1960s he became a pioneer in the emerging field of data processing and its application to the hospitality industry. As the School's first director of research, Chuck was highly involved with IBM, NCR, Hilton Hotels, and other leading firms in practical application of information systems to the industry. Chuck was the consummate faculty member. Engaged with teaching and research alike, he served at one time or another on practically every school committee as well as two terms as acting dean of the School. In 1949-50 he was appointed to supervise the construction of Statler Hall, which was built on the former site of faculty homes lining East Avenue.

All this time Chuck continued to operate his beloved Star Lake Inn, travelling north each spring weekend to prepare for the upcoming season. As a professional hotelier, Chuck also served as president of the Cornell Society of Hotelmen and was a director of the New York State Hotel Association. He is the quintessential faculty member and alumnus, combining passions for education, research, and service to the university and industry.

It is rare, indeed, when faculty and alumni together can honor the myriad contributions of one of their own. We remember with affection and love our friend, colleague, and mentor, Charles I. Sayles. Many lives are richer today for having known and worked with Chuck.

Richard H. Penner, Richard G. Moore, Robert M. Chase