

Anson Wright Gibson

October 31, 1892 — February 19, 1977

Anson Wright Gibson, who referred to himself as Wright Gibson, but who invariably was called Gibby by his many friends, died in Ithaca, New York, on February 19, 1977, at the age of eighty-four. For almost half a century, both prior to and subsequent to retirement, he had served Cornell University, and particularly the New York State College of Agriculture, with devotion and distinction.

Professor Gibson was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on October 31, 1892. When he was two years old, his family moved to a small farm in Greenville, New York, a short distance from Albany. Here his father was engaged for a number of years in small-scale farming and in a wholesale egg business: in addition, he served as secretary of the Farmers' Fire Insurance Company.

Following his graduation from high school in 1911, Wright worked for two years on the home farm and for neighboring farmers. For three months during this period, he attended Albany Business College. In September 1915, he enrolled in the New York State College of Agriculture as a special student, and on completing two years of study in this category, he returned home. But, after being at home for only two months, he was asked by Professor Asa King to return to Ithaca to teach a newly organized course in farm practice. During the next two years, he combined responsibilities as instructor in farm practice with enrollment as a student, both during the regular terms and in summer school. In June 1917 he was graduated with the B.S. degree.

Wright spent the next four years in Virginia, first as a farm manager, then as operator of his own farm. In 1921, he was again asked to return to Cornell, this time to conduct a study of former students of the College of Agriculture. This study was concerned both with the location and with the occupation of these alumni, and it resulted in December 1923 in the publication of the alumni directory of the New York State College of Agriculture.

Although he undoubtedly did not then realize it, the publication of the alumni directory marked the beginning of a lifetime of sincere concern and effort directed by Wright Gibson toward more adequate selection and preparation of students and toward appropriate placement of and continued interest in graduates. During the next few years, he conducted further studies concerning course selection by students, faculty advising, and forces that had a bearing on student success. At the same time, he took courses in the field of education both at Cornell and in the 1927 summer session at Harvard; in June 1928, he was awarded the Master of Science degree from Cornell.

On July 1, 1928, Wright Gibson was transferred from the Office of Farm Practice to the Office of Resident Instruction and was given the title of associate secretary in charge of former student relations, vocational guidance, and placement. In 1934, he was appointed assistant professor in personnel administration, and in 1937 he was promoted to full professor. In 1940, when Dr. Cornelius Betten moved from the Office of Resident Instruction to become dean of the University Faculty, he was appointed director of resident instruction. He served in this capacity until his retirement on June 30, 1960.

Throughout his tenure as director of resident instruction, Professor Gibson devoted his energies toward implementing within the College of Agriculture policies and procedures that would reflect his educational philosophy. He was convinced of the need to recognize individual differences in students and of the importance of providing curricula that were sufficiently flexible to allow students considerable latitude to devise individualized programs. At the same time, he recognized that students needed help in making wise decisions; and to this end, he worked untiringly for a strong faculty advisory system that would provide sound guidance and be well received by students. He had excellent rapport with the faculty of agriculture and worked with its members toward improving teaching and toward promoting the college's service to agriculture in particular, as well as to all citizens of New York State and elsewhere. As secretary of the faculty of agriculture, he provided carefully written minutes that reflected accurately, but concisely, the deliberations of the faculty. Each year he was responsible for the preparation of the college *Announcement*, and he edited accurately departmental contributions to this publication.

Professor Gibson accepted a number of responsibilities outside the immediate purview of the Office of Resident Instruction. Within the University, he was armed services representative of Cornell University and chairman of the University Committee on Student War Service during World War II; he served on the board of directors of the *Cornell Daily Sun* and on the board of managers of Willard Straight Hall; he was a faculty trustee on the Board of Trustees; and he was on a number of committees. Within the college, he was secretary-treasurer of the Alumni Association for forty years, a member of the board of directors of the *Cornell Countryman*, and on several occasions, acting dean of the college. Outside the University, he was secretary-treasurer of the local Alpha Gamma Rho Corporation Board and national president of the fraternity for two years; he was president of the local Boy Scout Council and recipient of the Silver Beaver Award; and he was elected to important offices in the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities.

After his retirement when he was named professor in personnel administration emeritus, Wright Gibson was appointed to an interim contract team that visited Liberia during the summer of 1961 and helped to negotiate an

AID-supported contract between Cornell University and the University of Liberia. Subsequently, from 1962 to 1968, he served as campus coordinator for Cornell University for this Cornell-University of Liberia Project. In this capacity, he arranged for the assignment of staff and materials toward developing the University of Liberia.

At the time of his death, Professor Gibson was survived by his wife, Dorothy McCabe Gibson, whom he had married on April 23, 1919, and who died in Ithaca on, May 5, 1977; by two sons, A. Wright Gibson, Jr., and Philip B. Gibson; by a daughter, Mrs. Lionel M. (Sally) Noel; and by eleven grandchildren.

Throughout his life, Wright Gibson contributed much to Cornell University, and his educational philosophy continues to be reflected in the operation of the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, particularly in those areas that relate to resident teaching, faculty advising, and student and alumni relations. His outstanding accomplishments came about as a result of his friendly manner, dynamic personality, keen sense of humor, and his firm stand for any principle or procedure he believed to be right.

S. Reuben Shapley, Howard S. Tyler, John P. Hertel