

# Edward A. Lutz

*July 10, 1910 — October 9, 1987*

With the death of Edward A. Lutz at his country home on October 9, 1987, the university and the state lost a respected scholar and a leader in community affairs. His professional life was devoted to the systematic analysis of social problems and to the improvement of schools and local government. He was an educator in the broadest sense and was known throughout the state for his innovative programs to aid local administration. Ed Lutz was characterized at the memorial service as a perceptive, productive and public-minded member of the Cornell faculty and of the Greater Ithaca Community.

Edward A. Lutz grew up in the Catskill mountain town of Prattsville, New York and graduated from the College of Agriculture at Cornell in 1931. He worked for the Farm Credit Administration in Springfield, Massachusetts and Washington, D.C. and obtained an M.B.A. from the Harvard School of Business. In 1937 he returned to Cornell to pursue graduate work in agricultural economics under the direction of Professor M.P. Catherwood. This association was a decisive factor in determining his lifetime career as a specialist in local government and public administration and finance.

From 1940 to his entry into the Navy in 1942, Dr. Lutz was Director of the Bureau of Planning in the New York State Division of Commerce. He served on Admiral Mitscher's Staff in the Pacific Theater during World War II and was selected as a member of a group formed to assist General MacArthur in governing the occupation of Japan.

Ed Lutz joined the Cornell faculty in 1946 as a professor of public administration in the Department of Agricultural Economics and served with distinction in this position for thirty years. He became an emeritus professor in 1976. Professor Lutz focused his efforts on the problems of local and state governments in rural areas. His research, teaching, and extension were aimed to help units of local government provide needed public services efficiently in both rural and urban areas. His insight and dedication gained the respect and admiration of public officials throughout the state and the cooperation and support of other faculty at Cornell.

Throughout his career Professor Lutz was called upon to serve as advisor and consultant to numerous state and local government groups. He was a member of several special commissions including the temporary commission on the constitutional convention, the New York State-New York City fiscal relations commission, the joint legislative commission on school financing, and the state commission on per capita aid. He was instrumental in designing formulas for use in distributing financial aid to schools and local units of government.

His conviction that education was the key to improving government led him to initiate a great many schools designed to inform voters and to train local administrators. Among these were “Citizenship Schools” for training volunteer leaders in the community, the School for Highway Superintendents, and training programs for clerks of the boards and for assessors. Professor Lutz received widespread recognition and numerous awards for his innovative extension programs. In 1976, the New York Institute of Assessing Officers recognized Professor Lutz’s contributions by making him an Honorary Member of the Institute.

Professor Lutz collaborated with others on campus in developing programs. He was a key person in organizing the “Cornell Local Government Program” for training newly elected and appointed local government officials in rural areas. This program was sponsored jointly by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the School of Industrial and Labor Relations. In 1972 Professor Lutz received a national citation from the American Agricultural Economics Association for this distinguished extension program. In cooperation with Professor Harrington in Extension Administration, an educational program known as “Operation Advance” was developed to increase the confidence and competence of local leaders and citizens. This was used in extension programs throughout the rural counties of New York State and was a part of Professor Lutz’s commitment to helping local citizens take a more active role in the governance of their communities.

Professor Lutz participated in a number of programs abroad and gained an international reputation as an expert in his special field. In 1957-58 he and his wife joined the Cornell-Los Baños team in the University of the Philippines where he helped students learn more about citizen involvement in local government. He regularly attracted international graduate students who later became leaders in their home countries. In 1968-69 Professor Lutz received a Fulbright Fellowship to study local government in Norway. In 1978-79 he was leader of a team that assisted with the reorganization of local government in Dominica.

Ed Lutz was a scholar who put his knowledge and skills to practical use in the community in which he lived. Early in his career he was active in the affairs of the Willow Creek one-room school district. Later he served as a member and president of the Ithaca School District Board of Education. He served as chairman of the Town of Ulysses Board of Zoning Appeals, and in 1972 was appointed by the Board of Representatives to serve as chairman of the Tompkins County Reapportionment Committee.

Professor Lutz was active in a number of community organizations. He was a devoted member and president of the Tompkins County Public Library Board. He also was active in the Ithaca Memorial Society, the Ithaca Consumers Society, the Men’s Garden Club, Cornell Plantations, and the Rhodora Club.

Ed Lutz had a keen interest in ornamentals and pursued this as an avocation. The Lutz home was a place of unique beauty with a special collection of azaleas and rhododendrons. He not only cared for these shrubs and enjoyed their beauty but had each properly labelled with its botanical name. He had a lifelong abiding interest and love for the rural areas. Hiking, cross-country skiing, and mountain climbing were among his hobbies. As a friend and hiking companion once remarked, "It seemed that Ed knew every back road and trail in Upstate New York."

It was a pleasure for colleagues to work with Ed Lutz and share his quiet sense of humor and grace with words. He had a subtle and dry wit and was a master of descriptive phrases and short quips. Colleagues valued his editing skills. He fought hard for the demanding principles to which he was committed. Ed Lutz was serious about his work but never took himself seriously. His low-key approach proved to be effective and won him many friends. He was deeply committed to the improvement of the government of New York State and to making Tompkins County a fine place to live. He worked hard and long but seldom was in the limelight.

Ed Lutz is survived by his wife of fifty years, Madeline O'Connell Lutz; a daughter Sarah Saul of Austin, Texas; a granddaughter; three sisters; two brothers; nieces and nephews; and innumerable friends and associates.

*Kenneth L. Robinson, Bernard F. Stanton, C. Arthur Bratton*