

Chester H. Freeman

October 4, 1915 – September 9, 2008

Chet Freeman was almost always a Cornellian. He died September 9, 2008, having spent more than 40 of his 92 years as a Cornellian, both as a student (B.S. '39, M.S. '45) and a member of the faculty. He retired and became Professor Emeritus in 1980.

Chet was born in West Leyden, New York and grew up on a dairy farm in Constableville, New York. He enrolled in the College of Agriculture in 1935, completing the B.S. degree and then moving on to a Master's degree at Cornell. While a student, he was editor of the *Cornell Countryman*, the College of Agriculture's signature journal founded by Liberty Hyde Bailey in the early 1900s. He was also Chancellor of Alpha Zeta fraternity.

In 1940, Chet was employed by the Extension Service in Cayuga County. Then in 1941, he joined the New York State Department of Commerce as a planning research assistant. His career changed sharply as America entered the Second World War. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps where he trained as a B-29 pilot. During the war, Chet was stationed in the South Pacific where he flew 21 missions without losing a plane or crew. In later years, one of his memorable experiences was attending the reunion of the 58th Bomber Wing on Tinian in the Northern Marianas Islands where the unit had been stationed 50 years earlier. He attended many such gatherings around the United States, sharing stories of his experiences with many others. Flying was to be part of his life long after his military experience but at the more peaceful East Hill Flying Club, where he was a member and a civilian pilot and instructor.

In 1945, immediately after his war service, Chet joined the Department of Extension Teaching and Information (later to become the Department of Communication) as an Assistant Professor. For the next 35 years, he was to contribute to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and to the University in a variety of ways. He provided strong leadership from 1965-75 as head of the Oral Communication program that provided basic and advanced speech training for generations of students in the College as well as students throughout the University. He introduced a course in Parliamentary Procedure, something he himself practiced as the Parliamentarian for both the Faculty Council of Representatives and the University Constituent Assembly. He also wrote a self-instruction manual entitled *Parliamentary Procedure – Teach Yourself*, which received national acclaim. Chet taught Photography to undergraduate and graduate students in an era when photography involved film, labs and negatives. In recognition of his excellence in teaching and advising, he received the College's Professor of Merit Award in 1956.

Chet collaborated with Cooperative Extension conducting many in-service training sessions. He was instrumental in the planning and in the success of the department's "Communicating with Your Public" series of summer workshops that were attended by many people from public service organizations and local governments.

In 1961-62, he served as acting head of the department. Then in 1975, he was appointed chairman of what had been renamed the Department of Communication Arts. It was one of those critical times in the College's history when budgets were greatly endangered. In 1976, when a cut in department funds was proposed that would have eliminated Communication as a field of study at Cornell, he stood firm announcing he would resign as chairman if the proposal became a reality. The Communication teaching program survived and Chet served out his term until his retirement in 1980.

In retirement, Chet remained active in the Ithaca community. He was an avid wine maker and belonged to the Ithaca Wine Society. He also participated in City Club and volunteered as a driver for Gadabout, the community organization that provides rides for senior citizens.

Professor Freeman's influence continues in today's Department of Communication through the Chester Freeman Communication Leadership Fund Award. According to the intention of a grant in his honor, "the award is presented [annually] to a junior who best exhibits the interdisciplinary character of the department's program and who best reflects the spirit of Professor Freeman's contribution to the Communication Department and the Cornell community."

Royal D. Colle, Chairperson