



John Murray Elliot

November 6, 1927 – November 26, 2019

Dr. John Murray Elliot, professor emeritus of Animal Science, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University, died Tuesday, November 26, 2019, in Ithaca, New York. He was born November 6, 1927, in Howick, Quebec.

Following his graduation from McGill University (B.S., 1949), he studied for a master's degree at the University of Vermont (M.S., 1951), where he met his wife, Jane Preston. They were married in Burlington, Vermont in 1951. From 1950 to 1960 he was a member of the faculty at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. In 1956 he was selected as a Danforth Teacher and took a leave of absence to complete his graduate work at Cornell, receiving his Ph.D. in animal nutrition with minors in animal physiology and biochemistry in 1958.

In 1960, Dr. Elliot was invited to join the faculty at Cornell University as an assistant professor. He did so with the understanding that his primary responsibility would be that of teaching an introductory course in animal science and that he would have the opportunity to engage in research of his choice. For some 20 years, Dr. Elliot enjoyed this stimulating combination of responsibilities, often commenting that he had the best position in the world. Each fall semester he taught the large introductory Animal Science course. In addition, for many years he taught parts of a dairy production course and a course in the Veterinary School for students who lacked a background in animal science. Throughout his teaching career Dr. Elliot carried a heavy advising load and was actively involved in committees and other activities related to the encouragement of better teaching. In all, he influenced the lives of some 4000 undergraduates in his classes and subsequently served as faculty advisor to more than 230 of them. He was awarded national recognition for outstanding teaching by the American Dairy Science Association.

Dr. Elliot's research interests related broadly to the glucose economy of the dairy cow and were stimulated by his fascination with the unresolved etiologies of two important metabolic problems, ketosis and milk fat depression. The prominent role of propionate as a precursor for glucose production represented one dimension of his research focus. Realizing that vitamin B12 played an essential role as a coenzyme component for propionate metabolism, this pathway became a second focus. Using novel whole-animal experimental approaches, his research characterized the role that propionate and vitamin B12 played in the endocrine regulation of energy supply, hepatic rates of gluconeogenesis, and milk fat synthesis. Among his many scientific publications and lectures was a keynote presentation on "Propionate metabolism and vitamin B12" for the International Symposium on Ruminant Physiology in Clermont-Ferrand, France.

As a result of his productivity in teaching and research responsibilities, Dr. Elliot was promoted to associate professor with tenure (7/1/65), and later to professor (7/1/71). He served as acting department chair 8/15/81-1/31/82, and, subsequently, as chair from 1983 until his retirement in 1991. He was recognized for "Distinguished Administration" by Gamma Sigma Delta and then, on 8/30/1991, he was appointed professor emeritus.

During retirement, Dr. Elliot remained active around Morrison Hall (Animal Science) and as an emeritus professor, Dr. Elliot compiled information and wrote a history of the department: "Animal Science at Cornell University 1963-2000, Observations and Reflections of an Insider" that was published in 2001. This book provides details of faculty appointments and retirements as well as accounts of the changing academic landscape through the tenures of one department head and five department chairs. Appendices include the organization of the department, enrollment numbers in courses and curricular organization.

During his career, Dr. Elliot was a member of several professional organizations including the American Society of Animal Science, the American Institute of Nutrition, and the American Dairy Science Association, where for the latter he served as president of the Eastern Division, and later, nationally, as chairman of the Production Division. Dr. Elliot was named a Fellow of the American Dairy Science Association. He was elected to Sigma Xi, Phi Kappa Phi, Gamma Sigma Delta, Alpha Zeta and AGFU (Honorary Society for the New York agriculture community).

Dr. Elliot and his wife attended the First Congregational Church and were very active around their community. He was a member of the Cayuga Heights Volunteer Fire Company and his friendship with several of the firemen lasted into retirement. Together they helped one another with home and community projects. Dr. Elliot was also a good friend to many of his neighbors. He was a talented amateur do-it-yourselfer and in the neighborhood he was "Mr. Fixit" for many years.

A particularly important activity in retirement was City Club of Ithaca, where he served successively as scribe, vice-president and president. He derived great pleasure out of his

interactions with friends and colleagues at the weekly meetings and he especially liked the various programs that were presented.

After retirement, Dr. Elliot took up golf for the first time and for more than 20 years enjoyed the camaraderie of his golfing buddies, who often were among the first in the morning to arrive at the Cornell golf course. They usually played the back nine. Later he continued his interest in golf during February and March in Florida, where he had cultivated golfing friends from many parts of the country.

On the personal side, Dr. Elliot was a committed optimist in his outlook on life and the human condition. For example, when he visited his wife in an assisted living facility, he would remark on anything positive that happened...maybe she said a few words...or smiled...or got up and walked a little. He always looked for those moments in every visit and he had an uncommon ability to move beyond disappointment and loss.

Remembrance from colleagues and friends: Beyond his rigorous research capabilities and his world-class scientific accomplishments, Dr. Elliot was a genuinely authentic person. The sincerity of his friendship and the help that he offered to his colleagues and students was always initiated with his characteristic and slightly mischievous smile. The science was serious, but the comradery was always lighthearted and relaxed...sometimes whimsical. He was curious, asking questions and then immersed in your response. He was a man of character, admired and respected by all who knew him.

Written by W. Ron Butler, Dale E. Bauman, Thomas R. Overton, and Michael L. Thoney