

Edward C. Devereux

September 14, 1912 — March 14, 2002

Professor Edward C. Devereux died at nearly 90 years of age in Hawaii, where he and his wife Edwina had moved recently after some 50 years as active residents of the Ithaca community. His survivors include Edwina, now living in Ithaca; and two children: John in Madison, Wisconsin, and Catherine in Indiana, Pennsylvania.

Ed was born in Great Neck, Long Island, New York on September 14, 1912, where he attended the Kensington School. After graduating from the Phillips Exeter Academy in 1930, he went on to Harvard where he received his A.B. degree in Sociology in 1934. Following two years as a Research Assistant at Connecticut State College, Ed entered the doctoral program in Sociology at Harvard, where he was greatly influenced by the distinguished sociologist Talcott Parsons, and completed most of his doctoral work by 1940. After two years as a Sociology instructor at the University of Toronto, Ed joined the U.S. Navy during World War II, serving as Navigator and Executive Officer on a fleet tanker until 1945. He then was appointed Assistant Professor of Sociology at Princeton, where he remained for five years before joining the Cornell faculty as Associate Professor of Child Development and Family Studies in 1950, serving as Department Chair from 1966-70.

Throughout his Cornell career, Ed's major specialization was in the family as a social system and as a socialization context shaping the development of both children and adults. His strong interests in both sociological theory, and in the everyday issues faced by children and families in contemporary societies, enriched the experiences of his students as well as his faculty colleagues. He had an enduring commitment to utilizing his theoretical knowledge and experiential background to help create better community and family environments in the hope of enhancing human development. With his strong interdisciplinary interests, Ed played a significant role in bringing important sociological perspectives to his department's central focus on child development and the family, and also more broadly, in encouraging the bridging of the social sciences at Cornell.

Ed's teaching contributions at both the undergraduate and graduate level were extensive and multi-faceted, reflecting his inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives. His offerings covered basic areas such as the American family and the family in cross-cultural perspective, but also included such topics as social disorganization and deviant behavior, social structure and institutions, socialization in ecological perspective, personality and culture, and communities and neighborhoods as socialization settings for children.

Much of Devereux's research dealt with families and socialization practices affecting child rearing in a number of different societies, including the United States, Germany, Japan, Israel, and England. He began a long and fruitful collaboration with Urie Bronfenbrenner in the early 1950s, when they became involved in the detailed study of an entire small-town community and the manner in which it influenced the life course development of children and adults who lived there. According to Bronfenbrenner, it was Ed Devereux's insightful contributions to the many publications on which they collaborated that stimulated Urie's subsequent life-long emphasis on the especially powerful role of the environment in the development of human beings.

Ed's scholarly interests were surprisingly eclectic, as reflected in his writings on such topics as gambling and social structure, delinquency and criminology, the role of social research in business settings and the importance of children's play. Particularly notable were his observations and concerns about the often-impoverishing effects of excessive adult domination on the games played by children and youth. This led to the production of Ed's highly regarded documentary film entitled *Two Ball Games*, which demonstrated the positive effects of organizing children's baseball games with emphasis on cooperative, mutually supportive and enjoyable play, as compared with a more tightly controlled, adult-oriented approach.

Many of Ed's "extra-curricular" activities involved service to various community organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Youth Bureau, Mental Health Association, and the Unitarian Church. Among his favorite leisure activities were swimming and sailing, and he took great pleasure in plying the waters of Cayuga Lake in his sailboat, often with delighted guests aboard.

Ed Devereux is fondly remembered by his many colleagues and friends for his sense of humor, his collegial relationships with fellow faculty members, the congenial atmosphere he created with others around him whatever the setting, and his always spirited readiness to engage in challenging conversations on a wide range of ideas—characteristics which were valued by all who knew Ed.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, Henry N. Ricciuti