

William Irving Myers

December 18, 1891 — January 30, 1976

William I. Myers died at his farm home overlooking Cayuga Lake near Ithaca, New York, on January 30, 1976, at the age of eighty-four. His death terminated a long and distinguished career in education, agriculture, finance, and public service.

Dr. Myers was born at Lowman, New York, in 1891. He grew up and worked on his grandfather's dairy and tobacco farm in Chemung County, New York. When he enrolled at Cornell in 1920, he fully intended to return to his family farm. But Professor G. F. Warren, among others, influenced him to change his mind about returning to the farm after he was graduated in 1914. He stayed on at Cornell to continue his education in the newly established Department of Farm Management, now the Department of Agricultural Economics. He received the Ph.D. degree in 1918, then became an assistant professor in farm management, and two years later was promoted to professor.

As a young faculty member, Dr. Myers specialized in farm management, farm finance, and cooperative organization and management. He taught classes, conducted research, directed graduate students, and participated in extension activities. He was an inspiring teacher, counselor, and friend of those with whom he worked. In spite of his numerous activities, he always seemed to find time to assist others who sought his help.

Dr. Myers was an organized man who was able through exceptional talent and long hours of hard work to accomplish the full program he assigned to himself. He sought advice from those who could help him, and, in dealing with others, he was forthright in his comments of praise or suggestions for improvement, whichever he felt were appropriate. He served as secretary of the American Agricultural Economics Association from 1927-31 and as president in 1943. The Cornell faculty elected him a faculty trustee of the University in 1939.

In 1933, at the height of the depression years, Dr. Myers was asked to go to Washington by President Roosevelt to work on the reorganization and expansion of the federal farm credit agencies. He served as governor of the Farm Credit Administration from 1933 to 1938 and was largely responsible for the creation of the Farm Credit System. That system consists of twelve federal land banks, twelve federal intermediate credit banks, thirteen banks for cooperatives, and hundreds of production credit associations and federal land bank associations. For more than four decades this farmer-owned cooperative system has provided the means to channel billions of dollars in credit from the money markets to this nation's farmers. He resigned the Washington position in 1938 and returned to Cornell as a professor and head of the Department of Agricultural Economics. The untimely death in 1943 of one

of his close associates, Dean Carl E. Ladd, was the occasion for the president and trustees of Cornell University to ask Dr. Myers to be dean of the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University, a position he held with distinction until his retirement in 1959.

Dean Myers's counsel and advice were sought constantly by scores of public and private organizations. Within New York State alone he served on many commissions and committees whose functions were to study issues and advise the governor, members of the legislature, and other public officials on matters of policy. In national capacities, he served three presidents: Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower. He advised President Roosevelt on issues other than farm credit. President Truman asked him to work on the Famine Emergency Committee and the Committee on Foreign Aid. He was chairman of President Eisenhower's National Agricultural Advisory Committee, which worked closely with Secretary Ezra Taft Benson. All the governors of New York State during his tenure at Cornell relied on him for guidance.

In addition to serving on the boards of the Rockefeller Foundation and Agricultural Development Council, he served as a trustee or a member of the board of directors of numerous other organizations, including the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, General Education Board, American Institute of Cooperation, Twentieth Century Fund, Carnegie Institute of Washington, Eisenhower Exchange Fellowships, New York State Association for Crippled Children, Elmira College, and Vassar College. He was a member of the board of directors of many corporations, including Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York, Continental Can Company, Insular Lumber Company, W. S. Industrial Chemicals, Inc., New York State Electric and Gas Corporation, AVCO Corporation, Smith-Corona Marchant, Inc., Marine Midland Corporation, and Grand Union.

Dr. Myers received many other honors. In 1938, the American Farm Bureau cited him for "distinguished service to agriculture." In 1949, his Cornell Class of 1914 awarded him its Outstanding Achievement Award, and in 1958 he was elected a fellow in the American Agricultural Economics Association. He traveled widely and participated in numerous programs designed to build a stronger international agriculture and improved relationships among the people of the world family of nations.

Bill Myers, as he was affectionately known by all who worked with him, remained close to the soil throughout his productive career. He purchased a farm near Ithaca and for many years maintained a commercial poultry operation, as well as a large garden that occupied part of his time for relaxation. His bright cherry greeting, his fairness in dealing with others, his vision and guidance for the future of agriculture, will long be remembered.

Dr. Myers was married to the former Marguerite Troxell. He is survived by three daughters: Elizabeth Martin of Cincinnati, Ohio, Marian Kira, and Margaret McElwee, both of Ithaca, New York.

Glenn W. Hedlund, Robert S. Smith, Charles E. Palm