

# Helen Hager Giff

*July 14, 1908 — June 19, 1979*

Helen Hager Giff, professor emeritus of human nutrition and food, was born in Waukon, Iowa. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in food and nutrition at Iowa State University in 1929 and her Master of Science in 1944 at Cornell. From then until 1957 she worked part-time, first as an assistant in the Department of Food and Nutrition and, subsequently, from 1948 to 1957 as a lecturer in the School of Hotel Administration. After the death of her husband, Howard Giff, then dean-elect of the faculty at Cornell, Mrs. Giff was appointed to the position of assistant professor in the Department of Food and Nutrition. She was promoted to associate professor in 1961.

Professor Giff was initially appointed to teach two undergraduate-level courses in food preparation, one of them offered to students outside the College of Home Economics. The second, "Cultural Aspects of Food Preparation," was a junior-level course for majors in food and nutrition. Mrs. Giff brought to her teaching, as she did to all her activities, a lively personal perspective, a sense of history, and scholarly curiosity. Under her leadership, both courses acquired dimensions far broader and more theoretical than their original emphases on food preparation and applied nutrition. Mrs. Giff was intensely interested in the influences of cultural and social settings on food preparation and consumption patterns. As this interest evolved, "Cultural Aspects of Food Preparation," became "Socio-cultural Aspects of Food and Nutrition," a lecture course on the cultural, social, and psychological factors underlying food consumption and acceptance. Eventually this interest led Mrs. Giff to coauthor a book with Marjorie Burns Washbon and Gail Harrison. The book, *Nutrition, Behavior and Change*, was published in 1972 and has had wide acceptance as a teaching text and as a reference book for nutrition education at a variety of scholastic levels. It is now undergoing its second revision.

Professor Giff's commitment to nutrition education led her to active participation in extension and public service activities. She contributed significantly and, at times, took leadership in the preparation of extension bulletins. She and Marjorie Burns Washbon developed the script for a program, "Man's Search for an Elixir of Life," which they presented several times during the 1960 Farm and Home Week. Later on they used the script as the basis of a movie, "Nutrition Sense and Nonsense," which was used in the extension program and presented to many audiences.

Mrs. Giff's charm and outgoing personality made her a popular and effective committee worker. During her tenure at Cornell, Helen Giff served as coordinator for undergraduate advising, representative for the human

nutrition and food honors program, and coordinator of recruitment. She served as the College of Human Ecology representative to the Faculty Senate of the State University of New York. In 1971-72, Mrs. Giff was chairman of the dean's committee on the field study programs for undergraduate students. She also made major contributions to several college ad hoc committees. After her retirement, Mrs. Giff worked on the Tompkins County Comprehensive Health Planning Council, where her judgment and writing ability were greatly appreciated in developing proposals for the reorganization of Tompkins County Hospital.

Mrs. Giff died on June 19 after a brief illness. She is survived by a daughter, Sarah E., and son, Thomas H. Giff. Her many friends, colleagues, and acquaintances deeply sympathize and share their loss.

*Lois N. Post, Ruth Schwartz*