

# Charles Clayton Fischer

*February 11, 1928 — May 21, 1993*

Charles (Clayton) Fischer was born February 11, 1928 in South Bend, Indiana, the son of Wilbert and Frances Stover Fischer. He attended elementary and high school in South Bend. Chuck, as he preferred to be called, served in the United States Army Corps of Engineers with stations in the United States and in Japan. He attained the rank of Sergeant. After his discharge, he worked for several years before entering Michigan State University where he obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in ornamental horticulture in 1955 and his Master of Science degree in 1956.

In 1954 Chuck married Barbara Tomlinson while he was a student at Michigan State University.

After receiving his M.S. degree, he served as assistant county agricultural agent in ornamental horticulture with the Colorado Agricultural Extension Service in Denver, Colorado from July 1956 until October 1957. He returned to Michigan to become Genesee County 4-H Agent in urban ornamental horticulture and served November 1957 through July 1959. In September 1959, he was appointed assistant professor in the Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University with responsibilities as state extension specialist in ornamental horticulture. He was promoted to associate professor in 1965.

Chuck rapidly attained a fine reputation throughout the State as an expert in interior plant decoration. He gave lectures and demonstrations at county and regional meetings and at statewide meetings of county extension staff and leaders held at Cornell. He was a frequent participant on radio and television programs, and his appearances at the Horticulture Building at the New York State Fair in Syracuse were very popular. He also chaired the Cornell-Rutgers educational exhibit at the New York International Flower Shows of 1963 and 1964.

Professor Fischer wrote many articles on the effects of light on the growth of ornamental plants in interior situations, and the decorative use of lighting in home gardens. He also published on landscaping mobile homes, and the use of planters in landscaping outdoor patios and living areas. He wrote many newsletters on the culture of various interior plant species and his Cornell Bulletins, *Growing African Violets* and *The Selection, Care and Use of Plants in the Home* by Professors Fischer and Raymond T. Fox have been distributed widely both within New York State and nationwide. He also produced several slide sets used for Cooperative Extension Education in and beyond New York State.

In 1970 when a colleague was on sabbatical leave, Professor Fischer took over the teaching of the basic course in floral design in the Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture. A very popular course since the inception of the Department in 1913, it draws students from across the University. Because of its popularity, it had been limited to upperclass students outside the department and to department majors, and had always had a waiting list. Professor Fischer's approach to the course was one of freedom and informality, which allowed the students to relax and enjoy themselves while learning a new design skill and coming to appreciate the beauty of natural materials.

Professors Fischer and Fox also taught a course, Judging Ornamental Plants and Flowers.

In the last several years, Chuck was forced to reduce his teaching effort because of his increasingly frail health. He involved student laboratory assistants to lessen the amount of "standing" time. In the way in which he handled it, his approach gave advanced students the opportunity to teach under his direction, thereby giving them valuable teaching experience which already has proved useful to many of them in their future careers.

Chuck spent the last few years in increasingly difficult health circumstances. He was hospitalized several times for long periods and was finally forced to discontinue his teaching. His last hospitalization ended in his death on May 21, 1993.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara Tomlinson Fischer and his son, Gregory and daughter-in-law, Susan Fischer; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wilbert Fischer; and his brother and sister-in-law William and Helen Fischer; and several nieces, nephews and cousins.

During all of his tribulations, Chuck was never one to complain. He related well to his colleagues and he never let his afflictions be reflected in his attitude toward his students. His students both at Cornell and in extension across the State will remember him for his caring, kind, effective and concerned manner of teaching.

*Raymond T. Fox, Arthur S. Lieberman, Ernest F. Schaufler, Carl F. Gortzig*