

Harold R. Cushman

December 21, 1920 – July 28, 2007

Harold R. Cushman was born in Ferrisburg, Vermont and grew up on a dairy farm during the Great Depression. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II, taught high school agriculture in Vermont, served as an agricultural education professor at the University of Vermont and Cornell University, and spent much of his professional life working in the South Pacific. Harold is survived by his wife, Natalia, who still lives in the home they shared in Ithaca, New York; two daughters, Janette and Nanette; two sons, Robert and William; 11 grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. His eldest son, Richard, predeceased him.

Harold graduated from Vergennes High School, having been a student in the agricultural education program and serving as his local FFA Chapter President and as the Vermont FFA State Reporter. He worked his way through the University of Vermont with the help of scholarships, majoring in agriculture and graduating in 1941. He began teaching agriculture at Peacham Academy that fall and completed his first year of teaching before enlisting in the Army in August 1942.

Harold attended Officer Candidate School at Ft. Knox, Kentucky and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. He was stationed at Camp Polk, Louisiana until being transferred to England in November 1944. On Christmas Day 1945, the German Army began a major winter campaign in the Ardennes region of France that came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge. Lt. Cushman's unit had been scheduled to deploy some time after the beginning of 1945 but when Allied commanders realized the seriousness of the German offensive, he and his unit were immediately rushed overnight to France to help counter the attack. During the remainder of the war in Europe, he served as an armored Infantry troop leader and company commander in the 8th Armored Division of the U.S. Army. Lt. Cushman was wounded in close combat; his injuries resulted in medical evacuation and extended convalescence until the end of the war in Europe. By the end of the war, Cushman had been promoted to First Lieutenant and had been awarded the European Service Medal with Battle Star for the Rhineland Campaign, the Bronze Star medal, the Combat Infantry Badge, and the Purple Heart medal with Oak Leaf Cluster.

After the war, Mr. Cushman taught agriculture in Woodstock, Vermont for three years. After Woodstock, he was appointed to a half-time position as Assistant State Supervisor of Agricultural Education for

Vermont and attended graduate school half time, completing a Master's degree at the University of Vermont in 1949. He attended Cornell University for his doctoral studies and earned his Ph.D. degree in Agricultural Education in 1951.

Dr. Cushman began a long career in higher education as an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education at the University of Vermont in 1951. In 1955, he moved to Cornell University as a faculty member in the Department of Education serving as a member of the Agricultural Education team until his retirement in 1990. He taught courses in Agricultural Education, directed 39 graduate Master's theses and doctoral dissertations, developed curriculum, and worked to improve teaching methods.

Professor Cushman was best known for his international work. In the early 1960s, he was assigned as a Visiting Professor at the University of the Philippines College of Agriculture at Los Baños to help rebuild the undergraduate agriculture program with funding from the International Cooperation Administration (ICA). He followed his Los Baños ICA tour with post-doctoral study at the University of Hawaii, returning to Ithaca in 1962. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1963 and to Professor in 1968. Professor Cushman returned to Los Baños for a second tour in 1968-70, during which he helped establish the College of Agriculture as a graduate educational and research center for agriculture in Southeast Asia. He returned to Ithaca briefly in 1970-71. He was appointed by the United Nations as a Rural Education Officer at the University of the South Pacific in Western Samoa in 1972 and simultaneously appointed as the first Professor of Agriculture at the University of the South Pacific. His work led directly to the establishment of the University's Agriculture Bachelor's degree program. That tour was followed by a return to Ithaca lasting from 1973-79. His next international posting was to Papua New Guinea in 1979-80 followed by an assignment to the South Pacific Region Agriculture Development (SPRAD) Program in Fiji from 1980-86, on a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development with the University of Hawaii and Cornell University. As a part of the SPRAD program, Professor Cushman developed and implemented a teacher preparation program in Agricultural Education at the University of the South Pacific.

In all of Harold's international projects, he recruited local graduate students for Cornell to prepare them to staff the programs when the project funding was terminated. Between his international assignments, Harold was a teacher educator in agriculture advising undergraduates and graduate students, teaching, and conducting research. Jointly with the late Professor Fred F.K. Tom, he developed a program for evaluation

of college teaching that was used at Cornell and other higher education institutions.

One of Harold's former colleagues said:

“It was my privilege to work with Harold Cushman from my joining the CALS Education faculty in 1967 to his retirement in 1990. We collaborated in research, co-taught courses, and co-authored research papers. Harold's advice and assistance was very important for me as a new faculty member. He was also a close personal friend including deer hunting in New York and Vermont. I will both miss and remember him.”

A former student said:

“Harold Cushman was my faculty advisor at Cornell. As one of the early female agriculture teacher candidates, he gave me advice as if I wasn't a female in a male dominated world. He was similar to my parents by telling me that I could do anything if I put my mind to it. Thirty years later I am still following his advice and counsel.”

In 2005, Harold published a book of memoirs entitled The Other Side of the Mountain, in which he recounted his experiences as a child in Vermont, his war years in the Army, his years as an agriculture teacher in Vermont, his university career at the University of Vermont and Cornell, and his life with family and friends. Some of Harold's most interesting stories involved his experiences in the War, his days in Vermont and New York hunting deer and bear, and his experience in the South Pacific working in sometimes dangerous but always interesting settings. Reflecting back on his life with the kind of wisdom that comes only with age and experience, Harold concluded his book with what he called “a few rules for life:”

- Dare to dream big when setting your life's goals.
- Get all the education you'll need to achieve your goals. Don't let anything stop you. Stay in school.
- Work hard when you have to. Otherwise, don't strain yourself needlessly.
- Pursue your hobbies vigorously.
- Listen a lot – and carefully.
- Be a team player. You'll need the stimulus of others to do your best.
- If you can't say anything positive or pleasant, keep your mouth shut.
- Volunteer for tough jobs; they have more payoff. Take reasonable risks.

- Be persistent. Don't give in to aches, pains, or loneliness. Hang tough. See it through. Life is not always a stroll in a rose garden!!
- Make love the central theme of your life and your relationship with others.

*William G. Camp, Chairperson; Arthur L. Berkey, Daryle E Foster,
Richard E. Ripple*

