

## **Harry Theodore Stinson, Jr.**

October 26, 1926 – January 30, 2008

During his 36 years on the Cornell Faculty, Professor Harry T. Stinson had a lasting impact on the Biological Sciences at Cornell in the roles of teacher, department chair, and Associate Director of the Division of Biological Sciences. In the latter position, Harry was chiefly concerned with the Biology curriculum and advising of undergraduate students. Harry passed away on January 30, 2008, at the age of 81, ten years after retiring.

Harry attended the College of William and Mary and earned his Ph.D. degree in Botany from Indiana University in 1951. He established himself as a leading plant geneticist in positions at the College of William and Mary, and subsequently at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. Harry came to Cornell as a full Professor in 1962. At Cornell, Harry continued his research on the inheritance of traits in plants of the genus *Oenothera*, including fascinating examples of non-Mendelian inheritance of genes later shown to be in plastids. Harry also instituted an introductory undergraduate course in Genetics, a class that has evolved over the years and is still a central part of the Biology curriculum, leaving a lasting contribution.

With the founding of the Division of Biological Sciences in the mid 1960s, several new Genetics faculty were hired, and Harry became Chair of the newly formed Section of Genetics, Development, and Physiology. Harry continued, as Chair, after the unit became the Section of Botany, Genetics, and Development. He ended his service as Chair in 1980, just as the unit was split into the Section of Genetics and Development, and the Section of Plant Biology.

In 1978, Harry became the Acting Director of the Division of Biological Sciences, stepping into the breach left by the departure of Richard O'Brien. He served in this role until 1979 when Robert Barker arrived to become Division Director. At that point, Harry became Associate Director of the Division. Thus, from 1978-80, Harry simultaneously shouldered two major administrative responsibilities. He continued to serve as Associate Director of the Division until the Division structure was dissolved in 1999. Harry was highly regarded as a fair, effective administrator, and was particularly well known for his parsimoniousness in the husbanding of institutional financial resources.

In the position of Associate Director of the Division, Harry had a tremendous positive influence on the evolution of our undergraduate

Biological Sciences major, at the time the largest major at Cornell. Harry participated actively in all aspects of the program, from the Curriculum Committee, which considered an endless stream of course proposals and petitions from undergraduate students, to overseeing faculty search committees, to serving as faculty advisor to a very large number of undergraduate Biological Sciences majors, including all the transfer students. As the administration of Biology and Life Sciences grew more complex at Cornell, Harry was a source of information and wisdom about previous mistakes that did not need to be repeated.

This recitation of Harry's contributions to Cornell does not capture the humor, energy, and enthusiasm that he brought to all tasks at hand. Spirits tended to lift when Harry entered a conversation; there was usually laughter, and always the expression of strong opinions.

As he approached retirement, and continuing on well into his Emeritus years, Harry participated actively in The Cornell Tradition, an alumni-supported program that recognizes and rewards outstanding undergraduates. Starting in 1986, he again, became a classroom teacher, collaborating with Dr. Rita Calvo to present an extremely popular seminar course on Human Genetics and Society that was offered to senior students concentrating in Genetics and

Development. In this class, in addition to learning about human genetics, students research, discuss, and write about controversial issues in human genetics and development. Thus Harry ended his service to Cornell as he had begun it, in the classroom teaching a cutting edge course in close contact with students.

In 2007, the Office of Undergraduate Biology, the lineal descendant of the office Harry directed for so many years, instituted an award to honor faculty members chosen by the graduating seniors. It is the Harry T. Stinson Award for Outstanding Service to Biology Students. The award was presented on May 27, 2007, for the first time before the assembled graduating students and their parents. All in attendance were graced by Harry's participation in the ceremony, and it was clear that Harry was delighted at his being honored in this fashion. Remembering Harry and his legacy of contributions to Biology at Cornell brings appreciation, warmth, and smiles to all who knew him and benefited from his efforts.

*Thomas Fox, Chairperson; Rita Calvo, Ross MacIntyre, Rebecca Sparrow*