



George J. Conneman, Jr.

August 29, 1930 – July 13, 2015

After spending his early life on Long Island, New York, George Conneman matriculated at Cornell University where he earned a B.S. in 1952 majoring in animal science and agricultural economics. He then served as a radio technician with the United States Army Signal Corp in Germany from 1953 to 1955, and following his Army service, George returned to Cornell to do research and earned a M.S. in agricultural economics in 1956. He continued to work at Cornell as a farm management specialist before going to Penn State University, where he earned a Ph.D. in agricultural economics in 1967. He then returned to the faculty in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Cornell (now the Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management) as an assistant professor, rising through the professorial ranks, and retiring in 2000. A lifelong learner, he continued his education with sabbaticals as a research economist with the Canadian Department of Agriculture, a consultant for Farm Credit, and a teacher at Virginia Polytechnical Institute and University.

Conneman's appointment at Cornell emphasized teaching and extension programming, and he was soon recognized as an outstanding teacher. He received many awards for his teaching skills, including The Professor of Merit Award, presented by the CALS Senior class in 1975, the CALS Edgerton Career Award in 1996, and a State University of New York Chancellor's Award in 1996. He taught over 3,000 graduate and undergraduate students primarily in farm business management and farm appraisal courses. Many of the stories told in his classes were later published in his book, "General, Miscellaneous, and All Other". This book is a reminder of George's sense-of-humor and ability to make a point, pause, and smile as he skillfully engaged his audience.

Numerous former students, as well as agri-business owners throughout the state, credit Professor Conneman for their success. His ability to analyze business opportunities and communicate them effectively influenced many business decisions. A successful feed dealer credits Conneman with encouraging him to think more broadly to expand his business by consolidating smaller mills in different locations to a new facility in another location that offered potential for continued business growth. A former student wrote "Not a day goes by that I don't put into practice the economic principles that you taught me." Another said, "It is hard to put into words what a strong impact you had on my life...your enthusiasm [and] training...paid big dividends." Still another wrote, "I'm eternally grateful for George's friendship, support and ability to look on the bright side of things."

Over his career, he served the wider college, university, and Ithaca communities. Conneman was the Associate Dean for Academic Programs in the CALS for 11 years, where he oversaw undergraduate admissions, registrations, student services and career development. He developed and implemented the CALS Innovative Teaching Workshop and the Teaching Assistant Training Program. In addition, Professor Conneman supported Cornell by serving on University committees, representing the CALS Dean at alumni events around the country and working as Treasurer of the CALS Alumni Association for 17 years. "Cornell

University has never had a better ambassador!” according on an alumnus.

As an active supporter of Cornell athletics, he was seen frequently cheering on various sports teams. He had seats for Cornell men’s hockey from its beginnings in Lynah Rink, and he was also very enthusiastic about the success of the women’s hockey team. Moreover, George enjoyed a lifelong connection with the Dyson School, where as an Emeritus Professor, he often returned to Warren Hall for coffee and chats with colleagues.

In his extension role, Professor Conneman worked with Cooperative Extension Educators and farm families across the state on management and intergenerational transfer issues. He was appointed Faculty Director of FarmNet and FarmLink, which employs consultants to help farm families. He was proud to secure stable funding for the program, and he served as a consultant after his retirement. In recognition of his impact in the farm community, both through Cornell and his outside activities, George was awarded the Distinguished Service to Agriculture Citation by the New York State Agriculture Society.

Conneman was a leader in emphasizing the impact of personal and communication issues on farm business success. He authored numerous publications on helping the next generation of farmers successfully manage their businesses, and often focused on the importance of open communication when managing a successful farm business. He also wrote a column for the American Agriculturalist magazine.

The Ithaca community benefitted from his service on the Bolton Point Water Commission (Chairman for 10 years) and the Town of Ithaca Planning Board and Transportation Committee. He served on the Board of Directors of the First National Bank of Moravia and as a business consultant for Alfred Agricultural and Technical College. He also served

on the Board of Directors for the Eastwood Commons Residents Association and as its President for four of the six years that he resided there.

Raised in the Roman Catholic tradition, George helped establish St. Catherine's Catholic Church in Cayuga Heights, but he also spoke of the importance of the broad teachings of the Christian faith whatever one's faith-tradition. After the death of his first wife, Francie, and marriage to Diane Knack Conneman, he attended St. Luke Lutheran Church, where he and Diane adopted and mentored students as well as shared in other church-related activities. Among other things, he provided leadership in welcoming members and guests to worship. Beyond his lifelong work and volunteering, George enjoyed gardening, international travel, 5-star restaurants, afternoon tea, and time with his family. He was always a Chicago Cubs baseball fan. And he would say even if it takes the Cubs forever, they will win the World Series!

George is survived by his wife Diane, son-in-law James Vanek, brother Robert, and many friends. He was predeceased by his first wife, Francie, and his daughter Karlie Conneman Vanek.

Wayne A. Knoblauch, A. Edward Staehr and William G. Tomek