



William D. Pardee

July 7, 1929 – May 1, 2016

The Section of Plant Breeding & Genetics in the School of Integrative Plant Science (formerly Department of Plant Breeding & Genetics, formerly Department of Plant Breeding & Biometry, originally Department of Plant Breeding) lost a dear friend and colleague with the passing of William D. (Bill) Pardee at the age of 86 on May 1, 2016 in Ithaca, New York.

Bill was born and grew up on a family farm near Orange, CT. He worked on the home farm and several larger cash and dairy farms in the area through high school and on summer “vacations” while in college. These experiences developed his interest in farming and agricultural sciences. He participated in 4-H activities and became interested in plant breeding, which eventually became his career.

Bill attended Dartmouth College, graduating in 1951 with a degree in Botany. He then moved on to Cornell, graduating with a Ph.D. in Plant Breeding in 1960 under the supervision of Professors Lowe and Johnson. His first position following graduation was with the University of Illinois at Urbana. He returned to Cornell and Ithaca in 1966, where he spent the remainder of his career in Plant Breeding. He served as Chair of the Department of Plant Breeding & Biometry from 1979 to 1987.

Over the years, Bill became the consummate extension specialist. He was known for his sharp intellect and amazing recall of facts. Before the days of Google, he was often consulted as if he were a human encyclopedia. For 28 years he wrote a monthly column for the American Agriculturist. He provided the Plant Breeding contribution to, “Cornell Recommends for Field Crops” annually for 38 years, 1966 to 2004, as well as “Trends in Seed Use in the Northeast US” annually from 1966 to 1994. Bill was especially popular with farmers, seedsmen and Extension Agents around the state, probably because he was so down to earth. At any random diner in New York farm country, if Bill walked in, somebody was almost sure to come over and greet him by name. He knew New

York farmers and farms like few others before or since. Bill was an expert in diplomacy and meeting people where they were, which led to his universal acceptance by his audience, whether on farms or in academia.

Bill was a Fellow of the Crop Science Society of America and the American Society of Agronomy and served three years on the Board of Directors of both organizations. He was also a Fellow of the National Association for the Advancement of Science (NAAS) and a member of Epsilon Sigma Phi, which is dedicated to fostering standards of excellence in the Extension System and developing the Extension profession and professionals. Some of Bill's awards included the Outstanding Extension Faculty Award, the Award of Merit for Outstanding Extension Contributions, and the CALS Award for Extension and Outreach (1999).

Bill was known for his gentle spirit, kind heart, and welcoming smile. He never had a bad word to say about anyone and rarely complained, even through difficult health problems. He always wore a smile and shared his uplifting sense of humor. For Bill, the sun was always shining, even in Ithaca. He was probably the only plant breeder who could cite lengthy portions of the classics from memory, and he was especially knowledgeable about the Iroquois Confederacy and its member nations.

Bill had a unique ability to find creative solutions to complicated problems. He could listen to people who were deeply annoyed about something, perhaps even irrationally so, and set aside whatever frustration he might feel with the situation. Bill would come away from such conversations saying "Well, he/she makes a good point," and then come up with a creative direction to go in the future that, more often than not, addressed the concerns of all parties. He was a very creative problem-solver who had a unique ability to find common ground among disparate perspectives, and a consummate peacemaker.

Bill enjoyed family, gardening, board games, and movies, especially old musicals. He passed peacefully, while listening to one of his favorite songs, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." Bill and Barbara were active members of the Unitarian Church where Bill served on numerous committees over the years. In 2003 they moved to Kendal from their longtime residence on Warwick Place. They greatly enjoyed being part of the Kendal at Ithaca retirement community and appreciated the support and friendship of the residents and staff. Bill volunteered on many committees at Kendal, offering his leadership and wisdom for as long as his health permitted.

Bill is survived by a younger brother, Scott Edward Pardee, of New York City, his loving wife of over 50 years, Barbara Klaer Pardee,

and his children Sherry Pardee (Iowa City, IA), Scott Pardee (Ithaca, NY), Ken Pardee (Columbus, OH), and Jo-Ann McCoy (Bracey, VA). His other brother, Joseph M. Pardee of Monroe, CT, precedes him in death.

W. Ronnie Coffman, chair; Margaret Smith and Judy Singer

