

George J. Raleigh

October 22, 1898 — November 16, 1982

George J. Raleigh, professor emeritus of vegetable crops, died November 16, 1982, after a short illness, thus ending fifty years of productive, devoted association with Cornell University, the profession of horticulture, and the vegetable growers of New York State.

He was born at Clyde, Kansas, October 22, 1898, and received his B.S. degree from Kansas State College in 1922. His M.S. degree was granted by Nebraska a year later and his Ph.D. degree was received in botany from the University of Chicago in 1928. After the M.S. and prior to studying for the Ph.D. he was an instructor in pomology at Massachusetts State College. Following his graduate studies at Chicago he was employed as a chemist by Swift and Company in their fertilizer division. In 1932 he joined the Department of Vegetable Crops as an assistant professor and became full professor in 1937 and professor emeritus in 1966.

During his first eight years at Cornell Dr. Raleigh conducted a successful extension program on fresh market vegetables grown on mineral soils. He then transferred to a research position concerned largely with vegetables grown on organic soils. In this capacity he conducted a wide range of research designed primarily to assist the growers of these crops in New York State in remaining competitive with those in other production regions. He carried on fertilizer research with onions, lettuce, and celery, and lettuce improvement through breeding and selection. His introduction of the 456 lettuce variety in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture literally saved the New York lettuce industry in the early 1940s. The merit of his more recent lettuce varieties, Fulton, Oswego, and Minetto, is indicated by their almost immediate adoption in Michigan and Wisconsin as well as in New York. He also developed the varieties Summer Bibb and Buttercrunch, which made it possible for the first time to grow high-quality lettuce of the Bibb type during the summer months. Buttercrunch received an All-America Selection Award in 1963. Today, twenty years later, these varieties are still popular with both commercial growers and home gardeners.

George Raleigh was a leader in basic research on mineral nutrition of crops, particularly on boron for beets and cauliflower. He also investigated the role of silicon in plant growth and that of calcium and irrigation in tomato blossom-end fruit rot. Boron deficiency in beets caused the roots to color and made them nonmarketable for either fresh market or for canning. In cauliflower the problem caused the heads to deteriorate as they matured. In

some fields nearly the entire crop would be lost. His efforts contributed substantially to an understanding of these deficiencies and how to prevent them under practical field conditions.

He pioneered research on herbicides for controlling weeds selectively in onions grown on organic soils. His findings permitted growers to produce this crop without utilizing hundreds of hours of labor per acre for removing weeds by hand. Some of his findings are still standard recommendations.

George Raleigh's career at Cornell exemplifies our long tradition of freedom with responsibility. Although for most of his career his official job description included only research and his performance in this area was of very high caliber, he perhaps will be best known and remembered for his teaching and extension activities. He felt a strong responsibility to train graduate students in research techniques and philosophies, and his students are leaders in their specialties. Further, he believed that his research should help in solving vegetable production problems but that he could not be familiar with these problems, nor could he achieve rapid grower acceptance of his findings, unless he frequently visited with them and personally viewed their crops during the growing season. His personal concern for the welfare of growers as well as his sound scientific knowledge and judgment earned him their deep respect and trust. They were never aware that his official duties did not require him to spend those many hours viewing crops and counseling with them.

His wife, Janet, died August 2, 1980. He is survived by four children: Janet O'Connor of Ithaca; George, Jr., of Rochester, New York; William of Burlingame, California; and Edward of Wilmington, Delaware.

Elmer L. Ewing, Leonard D. Topoleski, Robert D. Sweet