

# Lowell Dohner Uhler

*May 10, 1914 — July 3, 1986*

The untimely death of Lowell D. Uhler, professor of biology emeritus, was a great shock to his many friends. Several of us had coffee together the morning of July 3, 1986, after which Lowell took his customary swim at Teagle. When a hurried call came from Gadabout, in need of a substitute driver, Lowell typically obliged and, just before departing with his riders, collapsed over the wheel. Thus suddenly ended the life of one of Cornell's most devoted and dedicated teachers, the son of the late Joseph M. and Naomi D. Uhler.

Lowell received his bachelor of science degree from Indiana State Teachers College, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and came to Cornell in 1939 for graduate study in entomology. He received his master's degree in 1941, but further graduate work was interrupted by appointments in 1942-44 as medical entomologist for the Douglas Aircraft Company in Gura, Eritrea, East Africa, and in 1944-46 as malariologist in the U.S. Navy with headquarters in Greece. On his return to Cornell in 1946 Lowell continued his graduate work and received his doctorate in 1948. His dissertation, "Biology and Ecology of the Goldenrod Gall Fly, *Eurosta solidaginis* (Fitch)," was published as Memoir 300 by the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station and was followed by a paper detailing mortality factors in more than seventeen thousand specimens of goldenrod galls collected over a fourteen-year period. This work continues to be widely cited as a foundation for many contemporary studies. The goldenrods and their associated fauna have become model systems for ecological and evolutionary investigations.

In September 1948 Lowell was appointed assistant professor of biology at Cornell to develop his celebrated course "Laboratory Methods in Biology." Cornell graduate students knew that that course was the only one in which they could learn how to stain and clear whole vertebrates, how to prepare study skins of birds and mammals, how to make tissue sections, how to stain vertebrate blood, and so on. Many of the course members were science teachers in training or experienced classroom teachers who wanted to improve their laboratory programs. They departed with a veritable suitcase full of prepared teaching materials and the know-how to produce more of them. Lowell's impact through the teaching of this course was catalytic. Those he taught continue to inspire an appreciation of biology in a wide audience.

Advancement to the rank of associate professor in 1952 and of professor in 1958 followed, and when the new Division of Biological Sciences was established, Lowell Uhler became a member of the Section of Ecology and Systematics in 1965. The following year he served as a visiting professor at the University of the Philippines at

Laguna, returning to Cornell in 1968. In June 1977 Lowell retired from Cornell University with the rank of professor emeritus.

Lowell Uhler was one of those illustrious teachers and biologists in the tradition of Comstock and Needham, men who did so much to make Cornell preeminent in the natural sciences. His concern for those he taught is reflected in the following statement from one of his former students:

I remember clearly my meeting with Lowell Uhler the day I arrived in Ithaca. It was my first encounter with a Cornell professor, and I was a bit nervous. His smile and his spontaneous warmth and interest immediately put me at ease. He showed me the laboratories and then described the course of study I would follow: Biological Techniques, Field Natural History, Nature Writing, and others. My thesis could be on any aspect of biology or biology education. The techniques course would require insect and vertebrate collections, plant collections, and on and on. I remember tingling with excitement. Lowell emphasized how important good technique was and how important it was for biology teachers to know how to prepare all types of specimens and teaching materials. This wasn't the way I had pictured graduate school. Lowell, in his serious but always gentle manner, had begun to shape my approach to biology. He taught us and showed us that it's good to get your fingernails dirty, to try things, to experiment, to do it yourself. He showed us that biology is "out there, not in texts alone."

Lowell Uhler held membership in the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the Ecological Society of America, the Philippine Association of Entomologists, and the Society of Sigma Xi and was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences.

He is survived by his wife, Iona P. Uhler of Ithaca; his two daughters, Karen U. Cushman of Loveland, Colorado, and Rae U. Wion of North East, Pennsylvania; five grandchildren; his sister, Helen U. Zimmerman of Oneonta, New York; and his brother, Ray C. Uhler of Bradford, Pennsylvania.

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