Chester "Chick" Forshey: March 21, 1925 – May 9, 2017

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It is with great sadness that the Horticulture section in the School of Integrative Plant Science at Cornell announces the passing of a respected friend and colleague, Professor Chester "Chick" Forshey. Dr. Forshey passed away in Venice, Florida on May 9, 2017. He was 92. Former colleagues remember him as the ultimate practical fruit researcher, with an unusually deep interest in the underlying physiological principles that control tree responses to weather and cultural practices. His enduring contributions have been in the area of applied physiology of apples that support a deeper understanding of how trees work.

Dr. Forshey was born on March 21, 1925 in Lower Salem, Ohio, to James and Opal Forshey. Graduating high school in 1943, he enlisted in the US Navy and saw action during World War II in the South Pacific as a Quartermaster on the high-speed transport ship, the John Q. Roberts. The ship escorted convoys and took part in maneuvers in preparation for the anticipated invasion of Japan in 1945. After being honorably discharged from the Navy in 1946, Dr. Forshey, like many in the "greatest generation," used the GI Bill to enroll at Ohio State University in Columbus. There he earned his Bachelors degree in Horticulture and his PhD in Pomology. Soon after graduating with his PhD, he joined Cornell University in 1954 as an Assistant Professor of Pomology assigned to support fruit research and extension programs in the Hudson Valley. He was promoted to Associate Professor of Pomology in 1958 and to full professor in 1966. He became superintendent of Cornell's Hudson Valley Laboratory in Highland, NY in 1968; the position he held until his retirement in 1989.

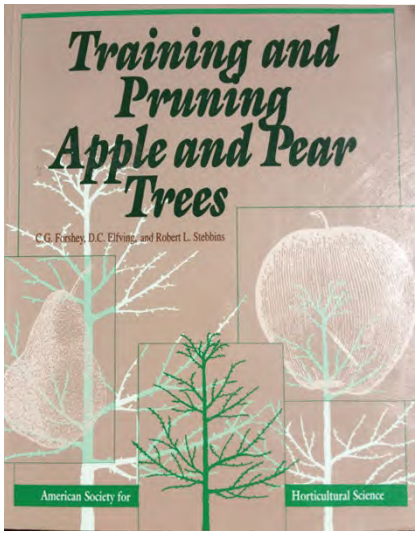
At the Hudson Valley Lab, Dr. Forshey was responsible for setting up an analytical laboratory on fruit investigations that continues to this day. His own research dealt with studying the nutritional needs of tree fruits, irrigation requirements, and chemical thinning of the apple crop. Towards the end of his career, his research emphasized the relationship between vegetative growth and fruiting in apple trees. This included studying the effects of such factors as variety and rootstock, nutritional status, pruning, crop load and growth regulators on the overall quality of finished fruit and productive capacity of the tree.

"During Dr. Forshey's tenure in the Hudson Valley, new facilities were constructed in Highland [New York] in 1963-64 and a large addition was completed in 1974. Dr. Forshey effectively mentored younger scientists and fruit extension staff during the 1970s and 1980s while conducting his own detailed research on nutrition, fruit thinning, pruning and young tree training," said Professor Emeritus David Rosenberger.

Rosenberger continued, "He is remembered for his sharp wit and for his attention to detail in both his research and in the precise wording that he used in his extension talks. Without his dedication to the

fruit industry, the Hudson Valley Lab would not exist today and the eastern New York fruit industry might not have maintained the vitality that it still exhibits today."

Although Dr. Forshey was a world-class researcher, he considered the interaction with tree fruit growers as the best part of his job. He maintained a close relationship with fruit growers in the Hudson and Champlain Valleys. Although retired for almost 30 years, "his growers" still speak of him and his work in glowing terms. Alan Grout, a grower in eastern NY talked with him just a few days before he passed away. In Alan's words, Chick was "direct, candid, sharp, witty, and spot-on as usual." Alan added that Chick would be proud of the apple crop he was harvesting this fall, as it was the "direct result of Chick's constant input and devotion for more than fifty years."



Win Cowgill, Rutgers Professor Emeritus, commented on the impact Chick continues to have beyond New York. "Dr. Forshey was a force to be reckoned with in northeast pomology circles. His efforts established the Cornell Hudson Valley Lab. The lab and the scientists and extension personnel stationed there, past and present, have been vital to the tree fruit industry in NY, New England and New Jersey. As the extension fruit faculty and researcher stationed in Northern New Jersey for 38 years, I counted on the lab and Dr. Forshey during his tenure for science based information on apple production."

In 1963, Dr. Forshey took his family to South America where he spent one year as a temporary member of the Rockefeller Foundation staff with its Chilean Agricultural Program. At the request of the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Chile, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the School of Agronomy of the Catholic University he assisted with the development of research and teaching programs in these different institutions. At the end of his year in Chile, he was named honorary professor at the Schools of Agronomy of both the University of Chile and the Catholic University.

Dr. Forshey was a member of Sigma Xi, American Society for Horticultural Science, American Chemical Society and the Soil Science Society of America. He published over 140 articles and co-authored the book, "Training and Pruning Apple and Pear Trees". He also wrote the article on "Apples" in the World Book Encyclopedia. He was a popular speaker at annual meetings of the Horticultural Society where he was noted for his writing style and terse form of commentary, both written and verbal.

He met his future wife, the former Lorraine Sweetland at a sandwich shop in Pleasant Valley, NY, soon after coming to the Hudson Valley region and they were married in 1956. They celebrated their 60th anniversary this past November. He and Lorraine were the proud parents of four children Douglas (Manakin-Sabot, Virginia), Gregory (deceased), Patricia (deceased) and Debra (Palmyra, Virginia). He also had five grandchildren: Meghann and Stephanie Forshey, and Kate, Jilian, and Logan Stutz.

Dr. Forshey was a dedicated family man who enjoyed spending time with his growing family. They spent many happy hours fishing at their camp on Indian Lake near Millerton, NY. He was also a renowned woodcarver and celebrated for the many lifelike woodcarvings he made of birds and ducks. He was an active member of the Hyde Park United Methodist Church for many years. Upon his retirement, he and Lorraine moved to Venice, Florida where they built their retirement home on the edge of a lake with a beautiful view of the sunset. When he wasn't chatting with Northern fruit growers, he spent his time tending to his own plants and vegetation, wood carving and cooking.

Although Dr. Forshey had been retired for many years, his book, Training and Pruning Apple and Pear Trees, first published in 1992, lives on. The book, written with Don Elfving from the Horticulture Research Institute of Ontario and Robert Stebbins from Oregon State University, remains a go to text for students around the world. As described in the introduction, the book was an "effort to provide guidance to the practical pomologist through the collection, organization, and summarization of current information on the principles and practices of pruning apple and pear trees." For a man who so valued his relationships with growers, the fact that his words and advice lives on is perhaps the most meaningful professional tribute Dr. Forshey could receive.

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