

CHARLES E. CUMMINGHAM (1981)



Members and friends of The Potato Association of America, it is my pleasure to present Charles E. Cunningham to you for Honorary Life Membership. Sharing the pleasure of this occasion with Charlie tonight is his wife Kitty, who is here, and their daughter Robyn and sons Kent and Craig. Charlie is well known to the membership of this association because of his long and varied service to the association, to the potato industry, and to the potato research community. Even so, let me review with you the high points of his career. He was born in Washburn, Maine, as was his wife, so very naturally he chose to go to the University of Maine after his release from the U.S. Army in 1945, where he served three years of duty in the infantry. At Orono, in 1948, he earned a B.S. in agronomy with highest distinction. For one year he served as assistant manager of the Potato Seed Department of the Aroostook Potato Growers, Inc., in Presque Isle, Maine. Then he returned to the University of Maine where he earned his M.S. in agronomy in 1952. He joined the faculty of the Department of Agronomy at Maine where he was responsible for a broad range of potato research including variety evaluation, fertilizers, herbicides, cultural, and storage practices. He also

taught the specialized courses in potato production.

In 1957, he joined Red Dot Foods in Madison, Wisconsin as potato breeder and agronomist. There he assisted the well known Dr. F.J. Stevenson in the potato breeding program to develop new varieties for potato chip processing. Among the products of this effort was Monona. His responsibilities also included recommendations for agronomic practices for the Red Dot production in Wisconsin and Alabama. While he was at Red Dot, he began his Ph.D. studies in genetics at the University of Wisconsin. Upon completion of his degree in 1962, he was recruited by the Campbell Soup Company to work in the Campbell Institute for Agricultural Research. For 12 years he was leader of the Campbell potato breeding program. In those years he shared with others in the release of Wauseon and Lenape and built up a reservoir of valuable breeding lines and selections. In my association with Charlie, it seems to me those years gave him his most satisfaction for he was able to work directly with the crop and with the people who produce it. However, his capabilities as an administrator prompted the Campbell Soup Company to promote him first in 1974 to Director of Plant Breeding for all their breeding and variety evaluation programs, then in 1977 to Vice President in the Pioneer Research Laboratory. There his responsibilities were broadened to include physiology, pathology, biochemistry, and genetics, as well as breeding. From 1979 until this past April, he was Vice President for Vegetable research and Plant Breeding with responsibilities for programs in the U.S., Canada and other countries. In April the Institute of Agricultural Research was deactivated and Charlie became the Director of Vegetable Research in the Institute of Research and Technology.

During his career, Charlie has actively participated in this association. He has served as a Director, Secretary, Vice President, and was President in 1967-68. He also served as Associate Editor for two years and Editor of the Journal for two years. I am sure than many of you will recall the many years of dedicated effort John Campbell contributed as editor, business manager, and publisher of the Journal. It was an unsettling experience for John and the Society when he decided he could not continue these duties. Our society is most fortunate that Charlie agreed to fill this breach. Probably no one else in the membership had the confidence of the rest of the members and of John. This made the transition so much easier. For all these contributions to the society and the potato industry, it is most appropriate that we honor Dr. Charles E. Cunningham with an Honorary Life Membership.

~Robert L. Plaisted