The Section of Plant Pathology and Plant-Microbe Biology in the School of Integrative Plant Sciences (formerly Department of Plant Pathology and Plant-Microbe Biology), and the Office of International Programs in the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences lost a dear friend and visionary colleague with the passing of H. David Thurston at the age of 87 on September 26, 2014 after a short illness in Ithaca.

H. David Thurston was born in Sioux Falls, SD, on March 24, 1927. He received his primary and secondary education in Sioux Falls and spent 16 months in the Air Force prior to entering the University of Minnesota. In 1950, he received a B.S. degree, majoring in plant pathology and minoring in bacteriology, and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in plant pathology in 1953 and 1958, respectively. H. David married his lifelong partner, Betty Hillers, in 1951, and together they had three sons – Jeffrey, Joseph, and David.

While working toward his Ph.D. degree, Dave spent two years with the Rockefeller Foundation in Colombia, and in 1958, upon completion of his doctorate, he joined the Rockefeller Foundation in Colombia as the director of their Plant Pathology program at the Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario. While in Colombia, he was promoted to the director of the Rockefeller Potato Program in Bogotá in 1963, and in 1965, to director of Plant Sciences of the Colombian Agricultural Institute. He and his family stayed in Bogotá until 1967. Throughout his 11 year career in Colombia, Dr. Thurston was known for his calm insistence on accuracy and thoroughness. Though his colleagues often referred humorously to his obsession with neatness, this trait was respected and soon became a trademark of a student or research assistant fortunate enough to come under his direction. These traits, and the ever present ‘cards in his wallet’, followed him to Ithaca and were a mainstay during his 29 year career at Cornell.

In 1967, H. David joined the college of Agriculture at Cornell University as the International Professor of Plant Pathology, one of the original ten International Professorships established in the College of Agriculture at Cornell by Governor Nelson Rockefeller. David Thurston is most
recognized as a dedicated contributor to and supporter of international plant pathology, which marked his career for many decades. Dr. Thurston showed exceptional leadership in training graduate students to deal with plant disease problems of the tropics and developing countries. He influenced generations of U.S. students to pursue careers in international agriculture, and prepared generations of international students for leadership positions in their respective national programs. He guided 22 students through their advanced degrees in plant pathology and served on the committees of dozens more. Dr. Thurston and his associates published extensively on the diseases of rice, oats, sugarcane, bananas, and other tropical crops, but it was his piercing insight into the phytopathological problems confronting the potato grower that brought him international fame. Though an expert in research on fungicides and their application, he pioneered the discovery of new sources of resistance to such classic diseases as late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) and brown rot (*Pseudomonas solanacearum*). For over twenty years at Cornell, Thurston worked closely with the potato breeders in the Department of Plant Breeding on testing breeding material for resistance to *Phytophthora infestans*, *Alternaria solani*, *Verticillium* spp., *Streptomyces scabies*, potato leaf roll virus, virus X, and virus Y. In addition, breeding material were maintained in tissue culture and tested (using ELISA) for freedom for potato viruses X, Y, A, S, M, and PLRV. Material was tested for freedom from potato spindle tuber viroid using a nucleic acid hybridization (cDNA) test.

Dr. Thurston taught or participated in courses in tropical plant pathology, traditional agriculture, agriculture in the tropics, and other international agriculture courses. From 1969-1997 Dr. Thurston taught International Agriculture 602 (Agriculture in the Developing Nations, which included a 2 week field trip to the American tropics). He was one of the founders of this course, which has now operated for 48 years as perhaps the most life-changing and popular course in the college. He remained active in teaching and writing after his retirement from Cornell University in 1995. Even at 79 years of age, Thurston, as an emeritus professor, could fill a 40-person classroom to its capacity in a course he originated on Traditional Agriculture.

Dr. Thurston’s abilities as a teacher, director, and organizer of research, and his knowledge of plant pathology at the international level, made him a widely sought consultant and speaker in the areas of crop protection, concepts of resistance, and international agricultural development. He traveled extensively in Latin America, Asia, and Africa for Cornell and while consulting for CGIAR, FAO, and US/AID.

Dr. Thurston raised awareness of policy makers and the public with regard to issues of world hunger and sustainable agriculture, and his legacy of books and photos will serve as key resources for future generations of U.S. and international plant pathologists. His first book, *Tropical Plant Diseases*, was published with APS Press. More recently, his major interest was compiling and analyzing information on sustainable plant disease management practices of traditional farmers, most of which are cultural practices. He published two additional books on these subjects: *Sustainable Practices for Plant Disease Management in Traditional Farming Systems* and *Slash/Mulch Systems: Sustainable Methods for Tropical Agriculture*.

In 1972 Dave Thurston was selected as a Fellow of The American Phytopathology Society (APS) and later received the APS International Service Award. He was recognized for his
contribution to student education with the ‘H. David Thurston Student Travel Award’ named in his honor.

As an active member of Trinity Lutheran Church, H. David was an ardent advocate of mission work, and through the church actively assisted in the resettlement of refugees from Vietnam, Myanmar (Burma), Russia and other countries.

H. David is survived by his wife Betty, sons Jeffrey (Ourania Chilimidos) of Oakland, CA, Joseph (Janet Durkin) of St. Paul, MN, and David (Emily) of Ithaca, NY; grandchildren Alexander and George Thurston, Nickolas and Kristofer Chilimidos Thurston, and Aaron Thurston; Brother John Thurston (Corpus Christi, Texas) and many nieces and nephews. He was pre-deceased by his brother Charles and sister Virginia.

Thomas A Zitter, chair; W. Ronnie Coffman, Gary C. Bergstrom