



## *IN MEMORIAM*

Sylvia Lane

Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Emerita

UC Davis

1916-2013

Sylvia Lane's passion for improving the welfare of consumers was the foundation for her worldwide influence on public policies to combat hunger and poverty. Her testimonies for the establishment and enhancement of the food stamp program in the United States and her advice to the World Health Organization about the nutritional status of people around the world were instrumental in improving the health of countless numbers of people. She spent her early years teaching finance – even publishing a textbook on personal finance – and as such was truly a pioneer in the field of consumer, consumption and household economics.

Her economic research focused on the social issues of income distribution and how food can be both affordable and nutritious. Integrating consumers' demand for food and nutrition with the supply from agricultural production, she introduced intellectual linkages along the food supply chain that were not commonly considered in her discipline, in her time. In her Fellows Address to the American Agricultural Economics Association in 1977 she said, "If all Americans are to have an 'adequate and healthful' diet, there has to be a nutritionally adequate supply of food." Such concepts have subsequently become accepted doctrine not just for the United States but for the world.

Sylvia was off to a fast start in her career as an economist. At eighteen, she was one of the youngest women ever to graduate from The University of California at Berkeley with a Bachelor's Degree. She also earned her MA in Economics in 1936 from The University of California at Berkeley, and performed additional graduate studies at Columbia University in 1937. She taught in a variety of settings including McClellan Air Force Base in Sacramento, during World War II at which time she also obtained a pilot's

license. After the war, she was an assistant professor at the University of Southern California where she also earned her PhD, dated 1957. She held the positions of Associate Professor of Economics at San Diego State University, and Professor of Finance and Department Chair at California State University at Fullerton.

She became the first woman to be a tenured-full professor in the agricultural economics profession, starting at U.C. Davis in 1969. In the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, and in the professional associations of The American Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA) and the American Council on Consumer Interests (ACCI), she became a mentor to countless students and colleagues. She was a role model to hundreds of young professional women at U.C.-Davis and U.C.-Berkeley and beyond. After her retirement from U.C.-Davis she became an economist at the Giannini Foundation at U.C.-Berkeley where she continued to advise students on their research until age 83.

She was a champion of women in a hitherto, male profession. Within AAEA she was instrumental in starting the Committee on Women in Agricultural Economics (CWAE) and she inspired the establishment of an endowed fund to connect women students with mentors around the country. She was beloved by her mentees and colleagues of all genders. At her death, several of her former students sent statements that could be read at a memorial service. One read, "She had a unique combination of grandmotherly warmth while being as tough as nails when that's what is needed." She advised her students to never say anything bad about their colleagues. She is quoted as saying, "Be kind, be genuine, and be the best you would like to be, and you will be fine." This last piece of advice helps explain why Sylvia Lane was so influential among her colleagues. The quality of her work and her intellectual generosity attracted the attention and respect of colleagues around the world. But her respect for others and her quiet yet persistent way of promoting ideas, policies and actions won everyone's hearts.

BDr. Jean D. Kinsey, Professor Emerita, University of Minnesota and student and colleague of Dr. Sylvia Lane.