

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS EUGENE BYRON SMALLEY

Professor Emeritus Eugene Byron Smalley, age 75, died on Monday, March 25, 2002 in Madison. He was born in Los Angeles, California on July 11, 1926. Gene began his studies at UCLA, and then was called into military service where he served in the Navy during World War II. He returned to UCLA and completed a B.S. degree in subtropical horticulture in 1949, and then transferred to University of California-Berkeley where he received an M.S. (1953) and a Ph.D. (1957) in plant pathology.

In the early 1950s, Wisconsin, and much of the eastern U.S., was experiencing enormous losses in urban forests due to the Dutch Elm disease. The Wisconsin State Legislature added a line item to the university budget to “solve the problem of Dutch Elm disease (DED)”, and Gene was hired to start this program. He quickly realized that the solution to DED was not to be found with pesticides, but in the breeding of disease resistant trees. He assembled elm germplasm from around the world, including collections on four trips to China. Based on this germplasm, he and his colleagues, Don Lester and Ray Guries, developed their research and breeding program. Gene devised several novel approaches to studying host-parasite interactions using the elm-DED model. In addition to conducting basic research on the Dutch Elm fungus, Gene also believed that his program should produce useful products – elm trees resistant to Dutch Elm disease. Together with his colleagues, several successful Dutch Elm disease resistant hybrids were created including Sapporo Autumn Gold, Regal, America Liberty, New Horizon, and Cathedral. These trees are sold and planted widely in the United States and in Europe. Gene had a vision for his work that combined the challenges of basic plant pathology while providing Wisconsin and the world with better trees.

Although Gene is best known for his work on the Dutch Elm disease, he also did extensive research on the toxins produced by fungi. His research established the conditions under which fungi produced mycotoxins in corn, hay, silage, and foodstuffs, and how these toxins affect animals and humans. He was recognized widely in the United States and worldwide for his research on both trees and mycotoxins. He helped found the UW-Madison Environmental Toxicology Center and participated in its program throughout his career.

Through all of his work, he believed that success in science required a few simple rules. First, be curious and attentive to every detail and clue that might provide insight into the way systems worked. Second, be thorough. Gene could never be prodded into hasty publication or release of a new cultivar. Third, live in the future. He was always looking forward and planning a new experiment, a new conceptual framework for his research, or a new trip or experience. He seldom looked back, except to correct a technical error.

Professor Smalley was a person of many talents and skills, with an engaging sense of humor. He was generous with his time, advice and encouragement, especially with students. He was quick to praise a good idea, critique a flawed idea, or to lend a helping hand. He took great pride in the success of students and colleagues. Even as we mourn his passing, we honor a life lived fully and richly.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE
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