

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS GORDON CHESTERS

Professor Emeritus Gordon Chesters died peacefully in his sleep at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, March 21, 2004, with his wife Joan and children at his bedside, after a week in Meriter Hospital, Madison. Several friends and former colleagues managed to spend some time with him during his last few days, but Gordon was latterly no longer able to communicate with anyone. He led a long and eventful, satisfying and successful life, and had just celebrated his eighteenth quadrennial leap-year birthday.

Gordon was born on February 29, 1932 in Leigh, Lancashire, England, just west of Manchester. His father and grandfather had been coal-miners, but having excelled in academics and sports at secondary school as well as in university entrance examinations, Gordon was awarded a British Government Scholarship and obtained a B.Sc. (Hons.) in Chemistry from the University of Wales in 1954. During a short term of employment at the famous Cooperative Wholesale Society's laboratories, he met his wife of almost 50 years, Miss Joan Greenhalgh. The young married couple immigrated to the USA, where Gordon obtained M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Soil Science/Bacteriology from the then University of Wisconsin in 1956 and 1959. Gordon was a fast worker! Since a half-time research assistantship in 1954 provided a mere \$90 per month, from which tuition fees had to be paid, Joan had to work full-time to help support her husband. Subsequently, funded by an unassigned WARF Fellowship, Gordon continued for 2 years of post-doctoral research in Soil Science/Bacteriology with his mentor Professor O.N. Allen, and joined the UW faculty as an assistant professor of Soil Science in 1961, being promoted to associate professor with tenure in 1964, and professor in 1967. He served as chair of the Soils Department from 1971 until 1972. In the fall of 1972 he was appointed director of the UW Water Resources Center, and chair of the Water Chemistry Program, positions he held until his retirement in 1998. During his career in Madison he directed the research of 19 M.S. and 33 Ph. D. students in Soil Science, Water Chemistry, or the Institute of Environmental Studies' Land Resources, and Water Resources Management programs, and the Environmental Toxicology program. Many of his former graduate students moved on to academic positions at this and other prominent universities. In mid-career, Gordon was awarded a D. Sc. by the University of Wales (1978) based on the quality and volume of his research, and was made a fellow of the Soil Science Society of America, and the American Society of Agronomy in 1979.

Throughout his years at UW-Madison, Gordon served as member or chair of numerous UW-Madison, UW System, and State of Wisconsin committees, and many national and international advisory committees. He was co-author with Professor Vladimir Novotny of Marquette University, Milwaukee of a 1981 best-selling textbook *Handbook of Nonpoint Pollution: Sources and Management* and with his students published some 200 articles in prominent scientific journals. He was author, co-author or editor of numerous research project reports – many published by state or federal regulatory agencies, and some of them huge undertakings. Much of his work involved state-of-the-art interdisciplinary research *inter alia* into the nature and properties of soil organic matter; soil conservation and land-use controls; the adsorption, plant-uptake, transport and environmental fate of pesticides; the quality of surface and ground water; the sources, transport, fates and toxicology of contaminants in air, surface and ground water; environmental modeling; and effective methods of information dissemination and technology transfer for purposes of natural-resources management, enlightened public awareness, and environmental decision-making. His zeal was constantly directed at the recognition, description, and quantification of topical problems that affected human and environmental well-being, and the search for practicable solutions that reflected the state of the science and recognized the realities of public policy and regulatory decision-making. In his waning years before and after retirement in 1998, he invested enormous efforts to help

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organize and facilitate publication of the initial volumes of the UNESCO-sponsored *Encyclopedia of Life-Support Systems*, a major continuing work directed at laying the scientific foundation – in a projected 70 volumes – for future global sustainability.

In his time, Gordon promoted, managed, and co-ordinated some of the then largest multidisciplinary research programs ongoing at the UW-Madison and helped create or participated in several cross-disciplinary degree programs in environmental science. He constantly strove to ensure that any important scientific knowledge and research results generated in these efforts would see implementation in public policy and regulatory decision-making.

In the private sphere, Gordon was something of an esthete. Here, too, he was amazingly knowledgeable and evinced a passion for the arts, music, and opera, often singing bass-baritone arias in Russian, German, French or Italian that he had learned simply by phonetics! For relaxation, he was also a devotee of erudite quiz programs, and a fanatic follower of all sorts of sports – he himself had been a top-class sprinter in his youth – and a superb gourmet cook. He had visited many five-star restaurants throughout the USA and abroad and could converse intelligently with any master chef on ingredients and recipes. He loved to travel, often accompanied by his wife and 3 children, and participated in many international research projects and scientific conferences. The first occasion he was ever in a hospital was following a massive heart attack, which occurred while he was he was attending such a conference in Paris, France. Gordon is survived by his wife Joan, a daughter Janine and her husband Jean Luc, two sons, Nigel and Steven, and granddaughter Sienna in the USA, and his brother Derek in England.

Gordon enriched the life of hundreds of students, colleagues, and friends throughout the world throughout and following his academic career. Those who knew him well recognized that, like many great men, Gordon could often be demanding, both of himself and of others, and difficult at times, lovable at others. Gordon was undoubtedly great. His continued presence among us will be sorely missed.

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