

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

**ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS GORDON R. CUNNINGHAM**

Dr. Gordon R. Cunningham, professor emeritus of forest and wildlife ecology, died on June 28, 2013 at the age of 91 at his home at Oakwood Village University Woods in Madison, Wisconsin. He was born on May 11, 1922 in Oswego, Kansas, son of Lorain and Olive (Rowe) Cunningham. His father was a mining engineer in southern Illinois who later worked as a surveyor in the WPA program to rebuild Highway 66 from St. Louis to Chicago. Gordon enrolled at the University of Illinois in the fall of 1940 but withdrew in 1942 to volunteer for the Army. He served 3½ years and saw combat in Europe and was on occupation in Japan.

Following the war, Gordon enrolled in the forestry program at Michigan State College. On December 26, 1946, during the Christmas holiday break, he married the love of his life, Vera Galli. He was inducted into the Xi Sigma Pi forestry honor society in 1947 and received his BS degree in 1948. He subsequently attended Penn State University and received an MS in forest economics and farm management in 1950. Gordon was then hired by the University of Illinois forestry department as an extension forester to work with 4-H programs, plant windbreaks around farms, and assist with research. In 1954, he became associate extension forester at Cornell University, working with youth programs and focusing on Christmas tree and maple syrup production. In 1961, Gordon returned to Michigan State, where he received his PhD. His dissertation was dedicated to “Vera, her third PhT,” that is, “putting hubby through.”

In 1963, Gordon moved to Madison to work for the University of Wisconsin as the state extension specialist in forest management. In this role he recognized and embraced the successful educational programs initiated by his predecessor Fred Trenk, such as the unique Demonstration Forests throughout the state. Mindful that over 60% of the 16 million acres of Wisconsin forests were in non-industrial private ownership, he further developed and led the private forest owner education program. This was a challenging and important task as private forest owners were, and remain, the largest, the most diverse and the most productive forest ownership group in Wisconsin. Gordon thoroughly embraced the *Wisconsin Idea*. He traveled the state for 20 years, organizing forestry field days, participating in landowner workshops, speaking at woodland owner conferences and serving on committees.

Professor Cunningham was an outstanding university ambassador and a true forestry leader. He was active with numerous forestry organizations including Wisconsin Christmas Tree Growers Association, Wisconsin Maple Syrup Producers Association, Trees for Tomorrow Camp (an industry-sponsored educational program), Society of American Foresters, the Michigan-Wisconsin Timber Producers Association (now known as the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association) and the American Tree Farm System. In response to the 1973 national oil crisis, he directed the Wisconsin Wood-burning Project leading to marked improvement in the design and operation of efficient wood-burning stoves and furnaces.

Dr. Cunningham was a founding member of the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WWOA), a non-profit educational organization that promotes sustainable forest management and use. WWOA has since become the largest forest ownership group in Wisconsin with over 2,500 members. During his career, he participated in hundreds of field days and educational events, authored dozens of extension publications and made numerous public radio appearances. In the process, he touched thousands of lives while promoting the careful stewardship of the state’s forest resources. In many ways, he was the public face of forestry in Wisconsin.

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Most noteworthy was Gordon's outgoing personality and kind nature. He was a true people-person who would go out of his way to help friend or stranger alike. He was known in every corner of the state and loved by one and all.

Gordon Cunningham retired as professor emeritus in 1983. He was as active in retirement as during his university years. He loved to travel (particularly Elder hostels) and he was a tireless volunteer. In 2002, he and Vera moved to Oakwood Village University Woods. While volunteering with the Red Cross, he donated 30 gallons of blood and plasma, and at Oakwood he was a volunteer driver, worked in the grocery store, wrote for the "Oak Chips" (residents' newsletter), helped manage the grounds (including the 9-acre wooded preserve), and was an events monitor in the Oakwood auditorium.

Gordon loved life and adored his wife Vera to whom he was married for 67 year, his sons Stephan and James, daughter Gail (1952-1969), granddaughter Aubrey, and great-grandchildren Onyx and Opal. He will be deeply missed by his family, colleagues, and friends.

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