

**Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison  
On the Death of Professor Emeritus John Berbee**

Professor Emeritus John Gerard “Jack” Berbee died on December 14, 2016 in Madison. Jack was born on October 12, 1925 in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. During WWII he served in the Royal Canadian Air Force and had just completed his training to deploy overseas when the war ended. Jack received his Bachelor’s degree from the University of Toronto in 1949 and Master’s degree in forestry from Yale University in 1950. Jack’s graduate studies continued in the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and involved prevention of damping-off diseases of conifer seedlings. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1954, he joined the Canadian Science Service, stationed in New Brunswick. In 1957 Jack rejoined the Department of Plant Pathology as an assistant professor to become a member of the expanding group engaged in study of tree diseases. He also became a member of the UW-Madison Department of Forestry when it was established in 1962. After more than three decades of dedicated service to our university, Jack retired in 1989.

Jack’s program contributed both to the development of forest pathology as a science and to application of knowledge in the practice of forestry. He maintained active research on forest nursery seedling diseases caused by soil-borne fungi, thereby contributing greatly to reforestation and restoration of productive forests in a region still affected by the great cutover of the early 1900s. Additional early interests in highly productive, intensively managed clonal poplar plantations led Jack into the nascent field of forest tree virology. He and his students were among the first to isolate and characterize a series of poplar viruses and demonstrate effects on their host trees. Jack utilized tissue culture methods to remove viruses from clonal material for production of virus-free clones with superior characteristics.

As part of a partnership between the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the U.S. Agency for International Development, Jack and his family traveled to Nigeria. There they spent three years, with Jack teaching in the Department of Plant Sciences, University of Ife, Ile-Ife. There he studied viruses of cassava, an important food crop in many tropical countries. Time in Nigeria was followed by a study leave at Oxford.

Jack was a long-time teacher of forestry undergraduates with his Department of Entomology colleague Dan Benjamin. Their course, “Insects and Diseases in Forest Management,” or “Bugs and Crud” (as it was known to the students), provided learning opportunities in the classroom, laboratory, and field. Through this course Jack succeeded in his teaching goal, to facilitate a “change in behavior” of students who would go on to be the practitioners of forest pathology and manage our nation’s forests. Graduate students mentored by Jack, and others on whose thesis committees he served, have succeeded in private practice, government, and academic positions. Students of Jack are still actively building the science and practice of plant pathology and developing tree and forest health management policies in the United States other countries.

Jack was professionally active as a member of the American Phytopathological Society and Society of American Foresters, and in our community as a member of the West Madison Rotary Club. In retirement with his wife, Flora, Jack tended a legendary backyard garden and was a helpful fixture in the Indian Hills neighborhood where they lived for so many decades. The pair traveled the country in a Volkswagen camper van, always experiencing nature, trees, and forests with an enthusiasm Jack had always so generously shared.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE: Professors Glen Stanosz, Ann MacGuidwin, and Patricia McManus