

Half Staff – Richard Seymour Gordon, 81

July 22, 2006

Richard S. Gordon, professor emeritus at the Morrison School of Agribusiness and Resource Management, Arizona State University, died on Saturday, July 22, 2006, at his summer home in Rockport. Dr. Gordon had a long and productive career as a research biochemist, working in industry at the Monsanto Company for more than 20 years, and then as a consultant and as a member of the faculty of Arizona State University for another 25 years. His areas of expertise were wide-ranging and included poultry science, animal nutrition, soil conservation, government regulation of agribusiness, and the re-establishment of native plants for both land reclamation and commercial uses.

At the time of his death, Dr. Gordon was an active member of the president of ASU's council on China. His main focus was on bioremediation and development of environmentally and economically sustainable food and agribusiness. In the Bohai, he helped establish the first Chinese shrimp processing facility that met both FDA and USDA standards; he worked with the Ministry of Agriculture on the development of the "responsibility system", which freed Chinese food and agriculture production from central planning quotas. He collaborated with China State Farms on the development of processed products to upgrade quality and shelf life for perishables.

Most recently, he had been one of the leaders in developing a collaborative effort with Inner Mongolian University and the Institute of Botany-Chinese Academy of Sciences to restore the badly degraded grasslands of Inner Mongolia in a manner that is both economically and environmentally sustainable. In recognition of his work in this restoration area, the Institute of Botany-Chinese Academy of Sciences appointed him honorary professor of the institute in 2003.

He taught courses in the Morrison School of Agribusiness for many years until his retirement from active teaching in 2001.

He was known among the faculty and staff at ASU for his dedication to graduate students and younger faculty. Right up until his death, he was working on the re-establishment of contaminated mining lands near Bisbee, Arizona. His work as the principal investigator on the Border Woodland Recovery Project sought to re-establish native plants along the salinated flood plain of the Colorado River.

He served as a visiting scholar at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government in 1979, where he edited and co-authored *Issues in Health Care Regulation* (McGraw Hill, 1980). He also served as an adjunct professor at the Washington University School of Medicine.

Over the span of several decades, Dr. Gordon co-authored numerous teaching case studies and scholarly papers and was a popular speaker and discussion leader at the Harvard Business School's annual agribusiness seminar. In 1971, President Nixon appointed Dr. Gordon to the White House Commission on Food, Nutrition and Health, where he served under the chairmanship of Dr. Jean Mayer, former President of Tufts University.

Dr. Gordon's career at the Monsanto Company included his tenure as director of research of the Agricultural Division and corporate vice president in charge of the New Enterprises Division. One of his early contributions in the 1950s at Monsanto was the development of methionine hydroxy analogue (MHA), a still widely used feed additive for poultry.

"Dick Gordon was a driving force behind MHA," said Dr. Fred Zienty, who directed research for the Organic Chemicals Division from 1947 to 1960. "He kept the idea alive within Monsanto and got MHA through the FDA."

Under Dr. Gordon's leadership, the New Enterprises Division brought out many innovative products in the late 1960s and early 1970s including AstroTurf and Puma (a banana-soy isolate soymilk). Also under his research leadership, the Agricultural division developed Roundup, a widely used herbicide. Dr. Gordon was well known throughout Monsanto for an iconoclastic style that challenged the management of the St. Louis-based company to enter new markets and to apply the company's scientific research in new fields.

Dr. Gordon also led an active civic life. He brought his knowledge and love of music to many years of service on the boards of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and to the Community Music School of Webster University (formerly the St. Louis Conservatory and Schools for the Arts or CASA). He also served on the Vestry of Trinity Episcopal Church of St. Louis, where he was a member of the church choir for many years.

At the time of his death, he was an active member of the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany in Tempe, Ariz.

An amateur violinist, he played actively until his death at the age of 81.

He was also a member of many scientific and cultural organizations including the Cosmos Club of Washington, the Tavern Club of Chicago, the Chemists Club of New York City, and the National Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Gordon earned his bachelor's degree at the University of Rochester, his master's of medical science at Harvard, where he was a Harvard Fellow, and his doctorate at MIT. He was born in New York City, the son of Jacques and Ruth Gordon. His father Jacques was concertmaster for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and later founded the Gordon String Quartet and Music Mountain, the nation's oldest chamber music festival, in Fall's Village, Conn.

He is survived by his wife, Emily; five children, Richard Gordon of Newport, Del., Elizabeth Gordon of Ridgewood, NJ, Jacques Gordon of Wilmette, Ill., Helen Gordon of Hatchville, Mass., and Charlotte Gordon of Rockport; 11 grandchildren; and a brother, Nicholas of Sharon, Conn.

Arrangements: A memorial service will be held on Thursday, July 27, at 11 a.m. in St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Rockport, with internment following at Beech Grove Cemetery in Rockport. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in his name to Music Mountain, P.O. Box 738, Lakeville, CT 06039 or to St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 24 Broadway, Rockport, MA 01966. Funeral arrangements are being conducted by the Burgess & Mackey Funeral Home, 201 Main St., Rockport.

