MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

GEORGE SPARR LUCKETT
(1886 – 1975)

George Sparr Luckett was a kind and gentle man. He had a gracious sense of humor and his quiet chuckles gave warmth and understanding to both friendly conversations and professional participations. He was a man devoted to the welfare of others and his experiences in that regard included contributions in the medical, public health, and educational fields. To cure, to prevent, and to educate could well have been his coat of arms.

He was born in Bedford, Indiana, of pioneer American stock, with a taste of European royalty in his background. He graduated from Wooster College in Ohio and obtained his medical degree from George Washington Medical School in 1912. His experiences in the private practice of medicine brought him understandings of the eternal problems of humanity and developed an interest in the field of public health, where he saw opportunities for the prevention of sickness and death on a broad scale. He visualized the conquest of illness through its control by sanitation and education rather than by the curing of sick people one person at a time, although he could not turn his back on that necessity.

He organized and established the first public health program in the State of New Mexico and served as its first State Health Officer. It was from this position that he came to Stanford University in 1930 as an Associate Professor of Hygiene to teach in the School of Health for 22 years and to serve as the campus public health officer.

An early impairment of hearing did not detract from his effectiveness in the classroom although many of his students remember his frequent manipulations of hearing aids in the constant quest for two-way communication in the learning process. He wanted and encouraged full-scale student participation with challenging questions and deeper explorations – characteristics of learning that were not possible without the classroom freedoms that he stimulated.

He was an endless seeker of knowledge in his own right. His readings of all manner of books extended nightly into the small hours of the morning and were accentuated in his late years, as though he recognized more and more the dwindling opportunities for intellectual advancement.

He retired from Stanford University in 1952. When he died at the age of 89 years, his many friends knew him as a scholar, a gentleman, and a humanist in the most practical sense of the word.

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