

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

WILLIAM R. ODELL (1906 – 1971)

William R. Odell joined the faculty of Stanford University in 1948 as Professor of Administration in the School of Education. He served until his death May 31, 1971.

He was born in Brazil, Indiana on August 7, 1906. He spent his secondary school years in Texas and California, entering the University of Southern California where he received a B.S. in Business Administration in 1927. He continued with graduate work at the University of Southern California 1927-1929, when he transferred to Teachers College, Columbia University where he earned his M.A. in 1930 and the Ph.D. degree in 1932.

While working on his Ph.D. degree at Columbia University he was employed as an Assistant Professor in Education 1931-36. He then took the position of Director of Secondary Instruction at the Oakland Public Schools where he later became Assistant Superintendent and from 1943 to 1948 served as Superintendent.

During the years at Oakland, William Odell became nationally recognized for innovations in public school administration. It was also at this time that the Stanford School of Education was searching for new leadership for its program in school administration. The outstanding candidate among all the public school administrators in the United States was William Odell. He was the unanimous choice of the faculty.

At Stanford William Odell took leadership roles in two major Stanford studies: the Kellogg Foundation analysis of school administration and, jointly with the Institute of Communications Research, a study of voters and the public schools.

Daily, William Odell brought live administration problems to his students and colleagues from his wide daily contacts in the field. Stanford was his academic home while the nation's schools were his laboratory. Many of the new roles of the school administrator today can be attributed to his incisive field studies. He maintained an "open door" policy for students, colleagues and visitors, providing a heuristic continuous ferment of discussion. His full professional life included authorship and co-authorship of various books and educational survey reports; he took an active part in many educational associations, Scottish Rite Organizations and was President of the SCAIFE Scholarship Fund, later serving as a Trustee. He was a leader in The American Association of School Administrators and served for some years as a trustee of Mills College.

Colleagues and students marveled at William Odell's ability to bridge the gap between those preoccupied with the theoretical and those preoccupied with the practical. The depth of his experience made him sensitive to the political realities while the breadth of his scholarship made him insistent on enlarging the context of administrative decisions.

William Odell will be remembered as a multiplier of human resources for the nation's schools. The leadership in education across the nation owes a lasting debt to his re-definition of public school administration.

Professor Odell is survived by his wife, Mildred, and two children, William and Harriet (Mrs. Charles Orr). Both children are Stanford graduates.

James D. MacConnell, Chairman

Paul R. Hanna

William J. Iverson

Lyle M. Nelson