

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

EUGENE J. WEBB (1933-1995)

Eugene John Webb, Lane Professor of Organizational Behavior in the Graduate School of Business and Professor of Communication (by courtesy) in the School of Humanities and Sciences, died at the Stanford Hospital on March 14, 1995 from respiratory disease.

Professor Webb was born on July 18, 1933 in Albany, NY, where he grew up. He received his bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Albany in 1954 and he entered the Ph.D. program at the University of Chicago where he graduated with a Ph.D. in Psychology two years later. His career began as a research psychologist working for Edward H. Weiss & Company from 1956 to 1957, and the Chicago Tribune from 1957 to 1960. In 1960 he was appointed as an Assistant Professor and Director of Research in the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. He subsequently was given a joint appointment in Marketing at the School of Business and became a full professor. From 1967 to 1968 he was on leave as Senior Technical Staff member of the Institute for Defense Analysis. Webb's association with the Stanford community began as a visitor in 1966, and continued as a professor in the Graduate School of Business from 1968 until he retired in February 1995. He was a leader in many of the Business School's most innovative programs. As a scholar and teacher, he played a pioneering role in bringing behavioral psychology into the mainstream curriculum of American business schools.

He began teaching advertising research at Northwestern and quickly established friendly relationships with those people in psychology and sociology who were studying attitude measurement and other facets of social behavior. These informal get-togethers with psychology colleagues, Sechrest and Campbell and sociologist Schwartz, led to a volume that was published in 1966 with Webb as the senior author, entitled *Unobtrusive Measures*. This enormously innovative book offered ways to describe and measure human behavior without intruding upon it. The book became a best selling methodological classic, translated into Japanese, Spanish and German. Gordon W. Allport, Harvard's distinguished personality and social psychologist, wanted to give it a Pulitzer Prize because of its creativeness and humor. Donald Campbell, one of the co-authors, said recently "What is still unique in the methods text is that the printed version retains the playfulness from which the book originated. This was Gene's doing." At one point they considered calling the book "The Bullfighter's Beard", since some observers believed bullfighters' beards grew faster on the days they fought. Webb cautioned: "No one seems to know if the torero's beard really grows faster on that day because of anxiety or if he simply stands further away from the blade, shaking razor in hand."

His research interests were as diverse as his personal interests. Initially his focus was on methodology which resulted in *Unobtrusive Measures*. During his Northwestern days he also published a book with Salancik, *The Interview*, in which they analyzed the reliability of interviewing as source of information for reporters. Later he reached out in many other

directions. With Leavitt and Pinfield, he published *Organizations of the Future*, and in 1981 he co-authored a book with Campbell, Schwartz, Sechrest and Grove, *Nonreactive Measures in Social Science*. His writings in journals include pieces ranging from tactics for political campaigners, to the implementation of organizational change. More recently he published a set of intriguing papers dealing with volunteerism and motivations underlying philanthropic behavior.

Webb's "unobtrusive" contributions to others people's research were at least as significant as his own published works. He was a helper. It would be hard to find a colleague whose research has not been given aid and succor by Gene's often unsolicited notes, references, and ideas. He searched across disciplinary boundaries, turning up relevant ideas that the researchers themselves would never have uncovered. Gene had the rare and wonderful capacity to tear bad work apart positively, in ways that could still leave its author smiling. Even in the last months of his life, he wrote lucid, perceptive, and, as always, helpful criticisms of drafts of colleagues' papers.

His research on organizations was complemented by years of extraordinary service to his own organization—Stanford University. He worked tirelessly on behalf of Stanford, serving on the major governing bodies of the faculty and numerous university committees and accepting major administrative assignments. "Gene was an institution builder," recalled former Business School Dean Robert Jaedicke. He worked hard and embodied the spirit of service and collegiality—a true university leader.

His organizational abilities were called upon by the University soon after he came to Stanford, at the time of the campus turmoil of the Vietnam Era. From 1969 to 1970, he served on the committee appointed by President Pitzer to resolve the controversy over the academic presence of the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). In later years he served on the Panel on Human Subjects and Medical Research, the Stanford Committee on Investment Responsibility, the University Committee on Health and Safety, the Committee on Graduate Affairs, and as a faculty sponsor for Stanford's program in Washington. What was especially important about Gene was his ability to infuse conversations and committee meetings (not always the most exciting events of any day) with humor and creative thoughts and still accomplish the work at hand. "When I think of Gene Webb, I think of him in the corridors," recalled a former colleague. "He was the person who linked people. He was the mortar that held the social groupings together."

One measure of the esteem in which Gene was held by his peers is indicated by his repeated election to the University Advisory Board, the seven member faculty group which reviews professorial appointments and counsels the President and Provost on academic policy and faculty grievances and discipline. It is the only group of faculty involved in University governance that is selected by the entire Academic Council. From 1978 to 1985 he served consecutive three-year terms, culminating in his election as chairman in 1984-85.

One of his most important contributions to the University came during his years on the Senate of the Academic Council from 1974 to 1977, 1981 to 1985, and again from 1989 to 1991. In 1975-76 he was elected its chairman. "A marvelous choice" said outgoing chairman Gordon Craig. "He has excellent judgment and considerable skill in persuasion." It was a demanding job. Stanford had emerged from the campus disruptions of the late sixties and early seventies but was suddenly and painfully confronted, as were many leading universities, with budget shortfalls as

the boom years of higher education gave way to years of retrenchment. Gene counseled his colleagues, "A test of us shall be the degree to which we approach these proposals, whatever they may be, with dispassion and with avoidance of provincial interest." His talent for leadership was evident from the first meeting that he presided over. Under his guidance, the Senate worked closely with the Administration to manage the deficit and reorder the budget without injury to the mission of the University. At the end of a year of difficult and dedicated work, he could report to the faculty: "Despite the internal strife . . . we are not demoralized. We continue to generate significant research; we continue to teach; we continue to try to improve that teaching; we have not been tripped by financial brooding; and we have survived and shall survive as an eminent institution."

Not all of his time as chairman of the Senate was spent on budgetary issues. During his tenure the Senate authorized undergraduate majors in East Asian and American Studies; established the rank of Associate Clinical Professor within the adjunct professorate; asked for reconsideration of a proposal for need-based graduate aid; extended the operation of the Stanford Center for Innovation and Research in Education (SCIRE) and the Stanford Workshops on Political and Social Issues (SWOPSI); and approved a policy of participating in a joint library program with Berkeley to coordinate research collections and reciprocate borrowing privileges. After his period as Senate chair, Gene joined with other former chairs in an informal group of elder statesmen of the University to provide advice on a number of important controversies facing the University.

In addition to his service at the university level, Gene was a leader in the Graduate School of Business where he served as an Associate Dean for Academic Affairs from 1981 to 1986. During this time he provided stability in the transitions between outgoing Dean Arjay Miller and incoming Dean Ren McPherson, and between McPherson and Dean Robert Jaedicke. These transitions made the role of the Associate Dean especially crucial. He carried out these duties with consummate skill and grace, introducing a number of innovations that remain hallmarks of the School today. His service to the School started soon after he arrived at Stanford. He was the founding Director of the Urban Management Program which, at that time, was one of the few public sector management programs to be imbedded in a business school. Through his stewardship the program expanded its role to become the Public Management Program. It continues to attract students who are interested in public sector and not-for-profit organizations. Gene co-led the school's MBA Review Committee in 1982 which resulted in several innovative changes to the curriculum and to the establishment of a new area of teaching and research, Business and the Environment. Earlier, he served as Area Coordinator for Organizational Behavior, and for several years, as a member of the Dean's Advisory Group.

Through his teaching and course development, he continued at Stanford the work begun at Northwestern to change the way people thought about social science research and the way it was taught in business schools. His teaching spanned courses in the MBA, Ph.D., and executive education programs. MBA teaching included courses in marketing, organizational behavior, power and politics, public sector organizations, political processes, crisis management, and most recently, his course on philanthropy that culminated with students "investing" \$10,000 in charitable organizations. Gene's Ph.D. teaching was a continuation of his research into methodological issues. He forged lasting ties to his doctoral students, several of whom have become leaders in bringing organizational research to bear on management issues. He taught in several of the School's executive education programs, including several stints in the flagship

Stanford Executive Program. He also founded and directed two executive programs: The Board of Directors Program and the Getting Things Done Program which later became the Executive Program in Organizational Management. In his teaching as in other aspects of his career, Gene is remembered for his broad knowledge, challenging questions and genuine interest in students. He was always willing to tackle new subjects and to place the interests of students and the institution above his own personal preferences.

Gene's talents and willingness to serve carried over to the other phases of his life where he served on many boards and committees. This included being the Chairman of the Committee on Technology Assessment and Exploratory Research, and a member of the Advisory Committee on Research Applied to National Needs Division, for the National Science Foundation. He was appointed by the California Chief Justice to chair an advisory committee of the California Judicial Council and was a member of the Grants Award Committee on Organizational Research of the National Institute of Education, the Advisory Committee of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, and the Joint US-USSR Venture on Management Education.

His public service included serving on the Board of Directors of the American Institutes for Research in Washington D.C. and as the Chairman of the board of The Experience Corps, an organization he helped found to utilize the experience of retired professionals. He was also a consultant to private companies including Bell Telephone Laboratories, Bechtel Corporation, IBM and the Tom Peters Group, where he was a member of the board of directors.

Gene Webb was a joyous, playful and intellectually creative member of the Stanford community. His friends at Stanford will remember the warm and thoughtful notes that he sent out. These notes were especially poignant when they were sent during his final months of life in and out of the hospital. Senator Paul Simon, a longtime friend called him "an uncommonly civil man with great research skills and practical insight." John Gardner said: "His outstanding gift was the gift of friendship." The people he worked with, Presidents, Provosts, Deans and faculty colleagues relied on his counsel and recognized his tremendous commitment to building this institution. As one said: "The term collegial was invented to describe him."

A memorial service was held in Memorial Church on March 21, 1995. Tributes were delivered by Albert H. Hastorf, John W. Gardner, Raymond Bacchetti, Charles A. Holloway and L. Geoffrey Webb. Dean Robert C. Gregg presided. Professor Webb is survived by his wife Mimi; his mother, Alice Webb Connors; and three children, Leigh Geoffrey Webb, Alison Webb Desmarais and Gregory Paul Webb to whom we extend our sympathies.

Albert H. Hastorf
Harold J. Leavitt
J. Keith Mann
A. Holloway, Chair