

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

CHARLES LANGDON WHITE (1897 – 1989)

Charles Langdon White, Professor of Geography Emeritus, died on February 15, 1989 in Palo Alto. He was ninety-two years old and had been a member of the Stanford University faculty for forty-six years.

Professor White was born in Denver, Colorado on June 2, 1897. He graduated from East High School, Salt Lake City, Utah in 1916, and then entered Denison University where he received the B.S. degree in 1920. In 1921-22 he was Principal of St. Albans Township (Ohio) Schools. This was followed by graduate study in 1922-23 at the University of Chicago, and then at Clark University where he received the Ph.D. degree in 1925. In 1942 he was awarded the honorary Sc.D. degree by Denison University. He was Instructor, economic geography, at Clark University in 1925 and then at the University of Pittsburgh 1925-26, Associate Professor of Geography at Miami University 1926-28, Professor of Geography at Randolph-Macon Woman's College 1923-31, and at Western Reserve University 1931-43. He left the headship of the Department of Geography at Western Reserve in 1943 to become Professor of Geography at Stanford until he retired as Professor Emeritus in 1962.

In 1944 Professor White was a lecturer, Institute of International Relations, Mills College. He was Visiting Professor of Geography in summers at Columbia University, 1945; Ohio State University, 1947; San Marcos University, Peru, 1947-48; University of Oregon, 1949; University of Guadalajara, Mexico 1954, 1957, 1961; University of Hawaii, 1955, 1959; University of California, Los Angeles, 1958. He led field parties in the summers of 1930 (Transcontinental), 1931 (Alaska), 1935 (Caribbean), 1937 (Mediterranean), 1940 (Mexico). In 1918-19 he served with the Tank Corps in the Army of the United States in the American Expeditionary Force (World War I). He served with the Commission on Cultural Relations with Latin America, Eighth Pan-American Conference, Lima, Peru, December 1938, and as Director of the Stanford Latin-American Workshop Seminar, 1944. He was First Vice-President, 1942-44, and President, 1945, of the National Council of Geography Teachers, and was a member of the Association of American Geographers, the American Geographical Society, the American Society of Professional Geographers, the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers (President 1954-55), the Ohio Academy of Sciences, the Cleveland World Affairs Council, and the American Legion. In 1954 he was awarded the Richard Elwood Dodge Prize given by the National Council of Geography Teachers for outstanding teaching in the field.

Professor White's special interests were in the relation of geography to politics, economics, and human factors in the understanding of national and world affairs-- particularly world population in relation to world natural resources and world food supply. He was especially valuable to Stanford at the time he came, for he became a key person in the Language and Area programs the University was establishing in Stanford's Army Specialized Training Program which formed one of many important contributions made by Stanford to the role of the United States in World War II. His special position as Professor of Geography in the School of Humanities not only made possible his teaching and administrative duties for the ASTP, but, in a more important context, it enabled him to begin to establish Geography as an increasingly valuable component of Stanford's

regular course offering. This led to the establishment in 1950 of the Department of Geography as a regular department in the School of Humanities and Sciences with Professor White as its Executive Head. He served as Department Head until 1954 when he returned to full time teaching and research. Professor Joseph Williams succeeded him as Executive Head. The Department offered programs leading to the A. B. (1950-62) and A.M. (1954-62) degrees with the possibility of a student's arranging a Ph. D. program through Graduate Studies, Special Programs. After Professors White and Williams retired in 1962, the Department of Geography continued for one year, but with no degree major offered. During 1963-66 "courses in Geography" were "offered by the School of Humanities and Sciences to students who wish to supplement their work in other fields", and the Department was discontinued after 1963. Then until 1978 the statement under "Geography" in Courses and Degrees read, "Undergraduate courses will be offered by the Food Research Institute", but after 1978 "Geography" was no longer listed.

Professor White was the author of several books: College Geography (1957); Essentials of Geography (1958); co-author of Geography. An Introduction to Human Ecology (1936, revised edition 1948); co-author of Regional Geography of Anglo-America (1943, second edition 1955); co-author of World Economic Geography (1964). He published a large number of scholarly and scientific papers, articles, and book reviews in professional and other journals. He gave a number of lectures at various schools, universities, professional meetings and conferences, as well as more general popular lectures at meetings of clubs and other organizations. He served Stanford as a member of several committees including the committees on Hispanic-American Studies, the Lower Division, for Research in the Social Sciences, on the Family Medical Plan (chairman), and as a member of the advisory board of the Hispanic-American Report.

In 1921 White married Mary Ruth Sanford who died in Palo Alto in 1981. They are survived by their two children, Mrs. Molly Ruth (White) Rudersdorf of Bandon, Oregon, and Langdon Jesse White of Portola Valley, California, and by two granddaughters, Mary Ruth Rudersdorf and Michelle White. For many years (1943-66) the family home was on the Stanford Campus at 421 El Escarpado, then in Menlo Park (1967-72), and then Professor and Mrs. White moved to Channing House in Palo Alto.

After his retirement Professor White held a number of visiting professorships, especially in summer sessions, at, for example, San Jose State University (five years), University of Guadalajara, Southern Methodist University, Miami University (Ohio), Transylvania College (Kentucky). In Stanford's 1985 summer quarter he taught a course in Geopolitics. He was particularly interested in this teaching, in traveling, and in writing. At Channing House, especially in the earlier years of his and his wife's residence there, he enjoyed various activities such as giving lectures for groups of Channing House residents, and arranging slide shows for their interest and entertainment.

In Professor White's death we have lost a distinguished and productive scholar, and a kind and genial friend.

Harold M. Bacon, Chairman
Ronald Hilton
Charles F. Park