



## IN MEMORIAM

Garrett James Hardin  
Professor of Human Ecology, Emeritus  
Santa Barbara  
1915 — 2003

Attempting to write an “In Memoriam” for Garrett Hardin in a dozen paragraphs is like trying to describe the ecology of a particular forest in the same amount of space — or trying to inflate a blimp with a bicycle pump. He was a leading ecological thinker, whose views influenced debates on abortion, immigration, foreign aid, overpopulation, and other provocative issues. Professor Hardin and his wife, Jane, exited their life in a dignified manner on September 14, 2003, in keeping with their desire to leave a little more room on “Spaceship Earth” for the next generations.

Professor Hardin was born in Dallas, Texas on April 21, 1915. While young he moved with his family over much of the Midwest (his father worked for the railroad). He suffered polio at an early age and had a shortened leg the rest of his life. He spent summers at his grandfather’s farm in Missouri and there learned to appreciate the balance between humanity and Nature. He attended high school in Chicago, abandoned his wish to become an actor, and instead graduated with a major in zoology at the University of Chicago — where he learned about problems of overpopulation from noted ecologist W.C. Allee.

Garrett continued his studies at Stanford University and graduated with a Ph.D. in microbial ecology, realizing while at the Carnegie Institutions plant biology lab there that converting algae into food would not solve the world overpopulation problem. At Stanford he met and married Jane Swanson of Hanford, California in 1941. They moved to Santa Barbara in 1946, where Garrett began to update the general biology offering in the college that later became the University of California at Santa Barbara. Jane proved to be a helpmate throughout their life and engaged in numerous volunteer projects on her own. Both were intensely concerned about overpopulation and deeply involved with Planned Parenthood, while pressing for freedom from “compulsive pregnancy” for women.

In 1949 Garrett published his elementary biology text, *Biology: Its Human Implications*, later issued as *Biology: Its Principles and Implications*. Both texts were widely used throughout the nation. He became Professor of Human Ecology in 1963.

In 1960 Garrett began to teach his Human Ecology course; his seminal paper in 1968, “The Tragedy of the Commons” — perhaps the most often cited paper about a biological principle — later appeared in more than 100 anthologies. Two companion themes highlighted his original and meticulously reasoned messages: the problem of world overpopulation and resultant environmental degradation. That is, freedom to breed without limit can only result in dire consequences for the human race.

As a teacher, Garrett was a disquieting and thought- provoking teacher. Students often asked how such a kind grandfatherly person could ask difficult and painful questions and come up with disturbing thoughts. Examples include: “Nobody ever dies of overpopulation,” “You can’t do just one thing,” “And then what?” Students would later comment that some of those thoughts and questions would stay with them for life.

A 1974 article, "Living on a Lifeboat," garnered a storm of protest, raising as it did the notion that a prosperous country cannot accommodate all prospective immigrants without dire consequences to its own integrity. Garrett also stressed the fact that exponential growth cannot continue indefinitely, whether in the realm of human population or economic growth. For that insistence, he also incurred the wrath of economists, who deal with short term increases without recognition of long term consequences of exponential growth.

During his career at UCSB, Garrett won many honors and awards, including Faculty Research Lecture (1966), Sigma Xi National Lecturer (1972-73), elected member in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1973), elected member in the American Philosophical Society (1974), Honorary Doctor of Humanities at the University of Puget Sound (1975), Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters at Northland College (1977), Planned Parenthood Federation of America Margaret Sanger Award (1980), AIBS Distinguished Service Award (1986), and Phi Beta Kappa Annual Award in Science (1994).

As late as 1999 Garrett published *Creative Altruism: An Ecologist Questions Motives*, a revised edition of earlier influential volumes, *The Limits of Altruism*, and *The Ostrich Factor: Our Population Myopia*. Earlier important books include: *Population, Evolution, and Birth Control* (1969), *Population, Evolution, and Birth Control* (1969), *Filters Against Folly* (1985), and *Stalking the Wild Taboo* (1996, 3rd edition).

Even though Garrett became emeritus professor in 1978, his publication of meaningful papers and books the remainder of his life led to the coveted Constantine Panunzio Distinguished Emeriti Award in 1997. That award is given only once each year to a retired faculty member in the entire University of California system for continued scholarly productivity, reflecting the more than 350 articles and 27 books (of which more than 700,000 copies were sold) that he published during his career.

Garrett's legacy continues through all of his publications and resources as found in the Garrett Hardin Society archives.

The Hardins are survived by four children, four grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

Adrian M. Wenner  
Arent H. Schuyler

Perpetual Growth - The Next Dragon Facing Biology Teachers  
The Social Contract, Fall, 1994.

"The idea of perpetual growth is embraced with religious fervor by mainstream economists and other worshipers of 'Progress' - the material sort of progress, that is... Our students are society's next generation- in power. We owe it to them, to society at large, and to posterity to help students build their expectations on a realistic basis. Exponential growth needs to be seen as a severely time- limited process, for which costs must be paid. Growth is ultimately limited by the environment, a truth that ecologists encapsulate in the concept of 'carrying capacity'."