



IN MEMORIAM

Gordon Abbott King
Professor Emeritus of Agricultural and Resource Economics
UC Davis
1924 – 2008

Gordon was a warm friend, colleague, scholar and mentor; he was born in Massachusetts as the second son of a Congregational minister. Gordon grew up in rural Connecticut. He received his B. S. and M. S. degrees from the University of Connecticut and his PhD from Harvard University in 1954. In November of 1954 he married Coralin Marr. In his early professional career, Gordy (as he was known to his many friends) served for three years as an economist for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. After completion of his PhD, he joined the United States Department of Agriculture, where his research on the statistical analysis of supply and demand relationships won early acclaim and professional recognition.

Gordy joined the faculty of the Department of Agricultural Economics, University of California, Davis, in 1957 and had a distinguished career for 33 years, retiring in 1990. When Gordy came to University of California, Davis (UCD), the campus and department were at the beginning of a growth spurt that was unabated for many years. His quiet, humble demeanor, sense of humor, and high ethical and academic standards helped set the tone and character for the department as it achieved national prestige.

As a junior faculty member at UCD, Gordy expanded his earlier research on supply and demand analysis to encompass spatial dimensions of location and trade. A series of studies emerged that formulated models of interregional trade and analyzed economies of scale in cattle feeding and beef packing. This work with students and colleagues eventually led to quantitative analysis of the optimal location of livestock processing facilities in California. Skillful and imaginative blending of theoretical and empirical analysis to solve real world problems resulted in three more awards from professional associations. He later extended his work on trade and location to focus on studies of regional resource use and projections of California agriculture. Additional awards from both the American and Western Agricultural Economic Associations recognized his jointly authored research work in this area.

A discourse on Gordy's academic career would not be complete without reiterating his research contributions in demand systems. He was primarily interested in obtaining precise estimates of price and income elasticities of demand in order to better understand the implications of policy changes for consumer behavior. He wanted to gain a better understanding of how consumers responded to changes in prices and income. A monograph on consumer demand for food commodities in the United States, jointly authored with one of his many students, received national recognition in 1972 and is still considered a classic in the profession. Another highly acclaimed co-authored monograph published in 1986 that illustrated his continued emphasis on applied demand issues was titled "U.S. Consumer Behavior Over the Postwar Period: An Almost Ideal Demand System Analysis."

While Gordy made a significant professional contribution in his own right, his skill in guiding and mentoring graduate students to motivate them to high achievement is well known. Many of his students who benefited from his counsel have gone on to make significant contributions in the agricultural economics profession. In recognition of his outstanding work with graduate students, the department established an annual Gordon A. King Outstanding Dissertation Award for the best PhD thesis. His departmental colleagues found Gordy to be a good listener and consultant as well. He was a valued mentor to his junior colleagues who found him to be especially helpful and encouraging. He is fondly remembered for his doodling on matchbook covers at the coffee breaks while carrying on a friendly discussion of the latest economic issues.

Gordy was a major contributor to the development of the Agricultural Economics program at UCD and its highly ranked graduate program. He served and chaired willingly on many important committees in the department, college, and university. He was a visiting scholar at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1964-65, at Cambridge University 1971-72, and at Cornell University 1977-78. Gordy was named a Fellow of the American Agricultural Association in 1983 for contributions to the profession.

Immediate survivors include his loving wife of 54 years, Coralin M. King, his son Larry King and his wife Patti, his daughter Jane King Silberstein and her husband Mark and twin grandsons, Josh and Ian, and his agricultural economist brother, Richard King, Professor Emeritus, at North Carolina State University.

Harold Carter
Ben French
Richard Green
Warren Johnston
Alex McCalla