

Agronomic Science Foundation

Soil Fertility Lecture Continues the Legacy of Leo Walsh

When Leo Walsh was growing up on a diversified family farm in Iowa in the 1930s, he never thought that one day he would be the dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CAL S) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (UW–Madison). According to Dr. Kathryn (Kate) VandenBosch, the current CAL S dean, Dr. Walsh has always held agriculture close to his heart and is highly regarded for his many agronomic and academic contributions. Dr. Leo M. Walsh’s lifelong interest in agriculture eventually led him to a very productive career that included work as a leading extension specialist, soil fertility researcher, and department and college administrator.

Being the oldest child in the family, Dr. Walsh learned about farming first-hand during his youthful years. In 1948, after graduating from high school in Barnum, IA, he enrolled at Iowa State University (ISU) in the two-year Farm Operation program, intending to become a farmer in north-central Iowa. After being awarded a Farm Operation Certificate in the spring of 1950, his plans changed; he decided to continue his college program in agriculture education. He earned a B.S. degree and USAF commission through ROTC in 1952. He spent two years on active duty, primarily in Japan and then came home and went to work as a vocational agriculture teacher in Correctionville, IA. Because he enjoyed working with the high school students, as well as with farmers in the school district, he decided to take his passion for agriculture to a higher level. He enrolled in the Soil Science Department at UW–Madison in the fall of 1955, earning a M.S. degree in 1957 and a Ph.D. in 1959.

In 1959, Dr. Walsh accepted a faculty appointment in the UW Department of Soil Science to conduct extension and research programs in soil fertility and nutrient management. In 1973, he was appointed chair of the Soil Science Department, a position he held until 1979, and then he served as dean of CAL S at UW–Madison from 1979 to 1991. Until he retired in 1994, he worked on water quality projects and helped administer a Midwest USDA-sponsored water quality program. He is a Fellow of ASA, a Fellow and past president (1979) of SSSA, and a Fellow of AAAS. Dr. Walsh served on the Agronomic Science Foundation (ASF) Board of Trustees from 1995–2001. Calling him a “thorough researcher, a strong advocate for the advancement of science, and a good friend of the college,” Dr. Walsh received the Distinguished Service Award from CAL S in 2007.



Alexander Barton
 Director of Business
 Development
 abarton@sciencesocieties.org
 608-273-8095

A ‘Margin of Excellence’

When Dr. Walsh addressed the ASF Board in 2001, he said that lectureships would provide a “margin of excellence” in terms of enhancing our program and profession at the Annual Meeting of SSSA. This has proven to be true for the

Leo M. Walsh Soil Fertility Distinguished Lectureship as the national and international scientists who have been selected to present at this lecture have been outstanding. The lecturers included Keith Goulding from Rothamsted Research in 2005, Dr. Michael J. McLaughlin from CSIRO Land and Water in 2007, Dr. Liping Yang from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science in 2008, A.E. Johnny Johnston from Rothamsted Research in 2010, David Kissel from the University of Georgia in 2011, Marcus Alley from Virginia Tech in 2012, and Paul E. Fixen from IPNI Americas Group in 2013. In 2009, multiple lectures on “Soil Testing and Problem Solving” reviewed the accomplishments of scientists during the early part of the 20th century. “Fertilizer Era” by R.G. Hoef, K.A. Kelling, and N.R. Usherwood documented the increase in the knowledge of essential nutrients. “The Environmental Era” by G.W. Randall and co-authored by J.L. Baker and G.W. Hergert focused on the environmental concerns associated with nutrient use.

If you would like to be part of the legacy and help ensure support for the Leo M. Walsh Soil Fertility Distinguished Lectureship, or if any other ASF-supported programs or activities may be of interest to you, please contact me at 608-273-8095 or via email at abarton@sciencesocieties.org. To make a monetary donation online, visit www.a-s-f.org.



Dr. Leo Walsh (right) and Dr. Bob Hoef at the 2007 Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

doi:10.2134/csa2014-59-10-7