

# Charles Donald Gates

*November 22, 1914 — July 6, 2004*

Charles Donald Gates, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Engineering, died July 6, 2004 in Williamsburg, Virginia, at the age of 89.

Professor Gates, whose special field of research was water quality phenomena, received a presidential citation in 1971 for his “efforts to combat water pollution on Cayuga Lake.” He was commended for giving of his time and talent as a member and vice chairman of the Cayuga Lake Basin Planning and Management Board. As a board member, the citation said, Professor Gates had “guided the planning for the future development of Cayuga Lake.”

A native of Ashburnham, Massachusetts, Don was born November 22, 1914. After earning a Baccalaureate degree at Williams College and a Master of Science degree at Harvard University, he worked as a civil engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in New Hampshire until he entered the U.S. Army in January 1942.

Don spent four years on active duty at the Army Chemical Center in Maryland, where he did research and development work in the detection and removal of toxic agents from water. He returned to civilian engineering activities as the head of the Distillation Test Section of the Engineering Research and Development Laboratories in Norfolk, Virginia, where he carried out desalination studies.

Don came to Cornell in 1947 as an Assistant Professor of Sanitary Engineering and was promoted to Professor of Environmental Engineering in 1959. He served as head of Sanitary Engineering from 1957-66, chairman of Water Resources Engineering from 1967-72, and chairman of Environmental Engineering from 1972-74. He was instrumental in overseeing the extension of the scope of Environmental Engineering within the School of Civil Engineering by championing its role in environmental and water resources systems engineering. For many years, he played a primary role in providing summer short courses for training water treatment plant operators in New York State. He directed the Center for Environmental Research from 1976-77. Within the College, Don supported the implementation of the undergraduate “college program,” and the teaching of economics with the College. Don retired as Professor Emeritus in 1980.

Professor Gates was active in Ithaca community water and wastewater planning and management as a member of the Tompkins County Water Supply Committee and as chairman of the Greater Ithaca Sewerage Study Committee.

He worked and consulted with the New York State Department of Health, United States Public Health Service, the Federal Water Quality Administration and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

After 33 years in Ithaca, Don and his wife Shirley moved to Virginia in 1980 to enjoy life on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, but they both maintained an active interest in Cornell and Ithaca and visited many times over the years.

In addition to his academic interests, Don was an enthusiastic gardener, well known for his magnificent garden at his Ithaca home on Texas Lane. He continued to enjoy his hobby in Virginia for many years much to the benefit of his neighbors who were the recipients of his garden's bounty. Don was fond of his high-fidelity audio equipment and for a time participated in wine-tasting events with a definite leaning toward New York State vintage. Don's well-known love of his family was reflected in his compassion, nurturing and fatherly advice to the many students whom he helped to succeed at Cornell. He will be long remembered as a dedicated teacher and advisor, a respected colleague and a good friend.

Don's wife, Shirley; three daughters, Nancy Gates, Karen Konefal, and Betsy Dahlke; and five grandchildren survive him.

*James J. Bisogni, Louis M. Falkson, Simpson Linke, Walter R. Lynn*