

## A. Gordon Nelson

*May 25, 1910 — April 7, 1986*

A. Gordon Nelson died on April 7, 1986, at Duke University Hospital in Durham, North Carolina. Following his retirement, in 1971, from the Department of Education, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, as professor emeritus of counseling psychology, he and Martha established residence in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He had been appointed in October 1945 as an assistant professor of educational and vocational guidance in the School of Education, the first person appointed to that field at Cornell. He became an associate professor in 1948 and a full professor in 1955. The name of his field was officially changed to counseling psychology in 1967.

Gordon was born in New Market, New Jersey, in 1910 and was educated in the public schools of New Jersey. In 1931 he received the B.S. degree in psychology from the University of Pennsylvania, followed by the M. A. degree in clinical psychology from the same university in 1933. In 1943 he received the Ph.D. degree from New York University in the relatively new field of applied psychology: educational and vocational guidance.

From 1931 to 1934 Gordon was a public school teacher in Pennsylvania; from 1934 to 1937, a school psychologist in New Jersey; and from 1937 to 1944, director of guidance in the Fairfield, Connecticut, public school system. In 1944 he came to Cornell as a counselor in the Veterans' Administration Center, helping returning World War II veterans make appropriate academic and career choices. The following year he was appointed to the faculty of the School of Education, in which he became a pioneer in organizing programs and courses, both on and off campus, to meet the needs of high school guidance counselors and college-level student personnel workers.

His research at Cornell focused on the development of techniques and approaches to counseling, the determination of needs in vocational and technical education, the establishment of training programs for counselors in schools and colleges, and the construction of various inventories for measuring student interests and aptitudes. He was the author of forty articles in professional journals and a contributor to six books and eleven monographs. Topics covered included secondary school counseling and guidance, college-level student personnel administration, career information, and related areas that apply to educational and vocational guidance. During his tenure at Cornell he served as the major adviser to 25 doctoral candidates and 125 master's degree students and as the minor adviser for 60 doctoral candidates and 140 master's degree students.

Gordon's professional influence extended internationally throughout his career. In 1952 he served as a Fulbright lecturer for a semester at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. During the spring term of 1958-59 he was

a Fulbright lecturer-consultant at Annamalia University, State of Madras, India, and he served additionally in India for the entire academic year 1965-66. In 1960 he spent six weeks making a pilot study, under sponsorship of the International Communication Agency of the University of Liberia, in regard to a possible ICA contract between Cornell and the University of Liberia. For the eighteen months immediately following his retirement from Cornell he served as a vocational guidance consultant to the International Labor Organization offices in Geneva, Switzerland, and New Delhi, India. His final international service was as a lecturer at Kevin Greene College in Brisbane, Australia.

Gordon was an active member of numerous college and university committees at Cornell, including those on educational policies, graduate degrees, and international education. For eleven years he was a member of the Language Examination Board of the Graduate School. He was elected to the Cornell Constituent Assembly in 1969. He was a member of several task forces on counselor education, human resources development, and academic affairs. He was a consulting editor to the *American Educational Research Journal* and a review editor for a number of commercial publishers, and served as consultant to a number of New York State-sponsored research studies as well as to some sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education.

He was a member of several professional organizations: a fellow in the American Psychological Association, a diplomate in counseling psychology for the American Board of Professional Psychology, and a member of the American Personnel and Guidance Association, the New York State Personnel and Guidance Association, and the National Vocational Guidance Association. He was elected to Phi Kappa Phi (an academic honorary) and belonged to Phi Delta Kappa (a national professional fraternity in education).

Gordon was preceded in death in 1980 by his wife, Martha, who was the director of elementary education in the Lansing Central School System for many years. He is survived by their daughter and her husband, Betty and James Marshall of Cheney, Washington, and one grandson.

His low-key personality was deceiving. He possessed a lively sense of humor. He had a keen analytical mind—his ability to knife through to the core of a problem was often evident in faculty discussions. He was extremely well organized and thorough; this was evident both in his courses and in his writing. He was an effective communicator, both as a classroom lecturer and as a writer. He was a demanding editor in respect to the theses and other written work submitted by his graduate students. He was also an excellent listener. These qualities plus his analytical ability combined to make him an especially effective counselor.

Despite his absence from the Ithaca area for the past fifteen years, he kept in touch with several of his former colleagues at Cornell. He maintained a busy retirement schedule, continuing to write and to travel widely until the time of his death. During his tenure here he contributed much to his department, the college, the university, his students, and his professional field. Both as a thorough professional and as a warm, friendly human being, he will be missed.

*Howard G. Andrus, Dalva E. Hedlund, Marvin D. Glock*