IN MEMORIUM

HAROLD W. HANSEN,
AMCBT HONORARY LIFE MEMBER
ST. OLAF PROFESSOR

NORTHFIELD, MN. -- Dr. Harold W. Hansen, Professor Emeritus of Biology at St. Olaf College and a founding member of The Association of Midwestern College Biology Teachers (AMCBT) in 1956, died Saturday, May 26, at his Northfield home following a long battle with cancer. He was 73.

Hansen, who taught biology at St. Olaf for more than 40 years, was awarded an honorary lifetime membership in the AMCBT in 1984. He also was honored in 1968 with a distinguished service award by the Minnesota Academy of Science -- an organization he served for six years as a director and as president during the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1980, he was named for a distinguished teaching award by the National Association of Biology Teachers.

A pioneer in instructional television, he offered a 12-week course "The Plant World" on KTCA, Channel 2, in the station's infancy. And, in addition to teaching virtually every biology course at St. Olaf, he also served as department chair for more than 20 years, wrote numerous scholarly articles for books and journals, and invented at least one device for better teaching.

That device, constructed from wood, aluminum and glass, uses the wedge interference filter for the examination of plant pigments. It enables a teacher to demonstrate the absorption of light by chlorophyll to an entire class rather than just one student at a time.

A native of St. James, MN, Hansen was born Jan. 28, 1917. After graduating from St. James High School, he earned his bachelor's degree from St. Olaf in 1938 and immediately began his prestigious career at the college as an instructor of biology. In 1942, he left to serve in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He was attached to the First Marine Division and served 28 months in the South Pacific. He rejoined the St. Olaf faculty in 1948 after earning his Ph.D. from Iowa State University. Hansen married Leona Irene Huso in Cottonwood, MN, on Aug. 28, 1948.

He did post-doctoral work at both the University of Minnesota and Cornell University (N.Y.) while continuing his teaching and research career at St. Olaf. He was promoted to full professor in 1957 and continued teaching until his retirement in 1982. He also oversaw construction of St. Olaf's biology greenhouse and started "Green Thumb Day" on campus -- an annual occurrence in which plants raised in the greenhouse are given away to students, faculty, staff and townspeople. That popular event, started in the 1960s, continues today.

An expert on both common and exotic plants and flowers, Hansen was named professor emeritus at his retirement in 1982 and further honored by the College in 1986 with the dedication and naming of the Harold Hansen Perennial Flower Garden near the St. Olaf Science Center.

During his career, Hansen served on many state and national science committees and directed a series of National Science Foundation institutes for high school science teachers. He also served as a judge for state, regional and international science fairs for the Danforth Foundation, of which he was an associate member since 1953. In 1962, he was a member of a six-man U.S. task force study group sent to Pakistan under the sponsorship of the U.S. State Department.

He was active in Boy Scout work in Northfield and Minnesota, was a member of the Choir and Board of Trustees for St. John's Lutheran Church in Northfield, and served as editor for the Sons of Norway newsletter. He held memberships in Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma Xi, the American Botanical Society and the National Association of Biology Teachers.

Survivors include a daughter Carol and her husband Kevin Collins of Northfield; a son Craig and his wife Kay of Apple Valley, MN; one grandson, Hugh Hansen; two sisters, Mildred Hansen Largey of Ruthven, IA; and Eunice Hansen Logan of Clinton, IA; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. He was preceded in death by his wife and one brother.

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