News and Views

Honorary Life Membership
in the Association of Midwest College Biology Teachers
Sister Marion R. Johnson

Sister Marion Johnson was inducted as an Honorary Life Member in the Association of Midwestern College Biology Teachers on September 20th at the annual meeting this year which was held at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. Sister Marion served as President in 1993-1994, as Second-Vice President (1983-1984), as an Executive Committee Member (1985-1988), and twice hosted the AMCBT annual meeting at St. Xavier University. She also was responsible for many years for recruiting vendors to our annual meeting. She is a person who is exceptionally easy to work with, well organized, and knowledgeable. Her many years of service to the membership are deeply appreciated by all of her colleagues.

Sister Marion is exceptionally well qualified not only because has she been a loyal member, active contributor, and officer of the society, she is also personally committed to what AMCBT stands for: Good college biology teaching! When you visit her office at St. Xavier University where she has long been an Associate Professor of Biology, classrooms, or labs, talk to her students, or hear of her enthusiasm for the Indiana Dunes, it is self-evident that her life is dedicated to student learning.

Sister Marion is an avid educator. She has demonstrated this through her teaching, participation in boards, conferences, and organizing. After receiving a B.A. in Biology at St. Xavier University in 1960 and an M.S. in Biology from the University of Illinois-Urbana in 1964, she went on to study and teach courses in Marine Biology, Desert Biology, Psychology, Basidiomycetes, Environmental Studies, Microbiology, Ecology-Evolution, and Plant Cell and Tissue Culture at Stanford, Arizona State, the University of Oregon, the University of Alabama, The University of Tennessee, Scandinavia, Illinois Institute of Technology, the Ecological St. of Galapagos and the Catholic University of America. Obviously, she is a polymath who simply does it all! She has a deep respect for the Kenyan winner of an alternative Nobel prize, Wangari Maathai. Sister Marion invited her and other noted environmental and peace activists to speak at St. Xavier.

Sister Marion is a curriculum innovator. She is one of those few senior professors who constantly is learning new pedagogical styles, adopting and adapting innovative materials, and urging colleagues to try something new or to at least take a look at something. At Saint Xavier she promoted the 4-1-4 plan in order that biology students could have extended field experience; she herself led student trips (courses) to Florida to observe sub-tropical flora and fauna. In addition to AMCBT, she is a member of the National Association of Biology Teachers and a variety of professional biological organizations including the Ecological Society of America, the Botanical Society of America, the Illinois Academy of Science, AIBS, Union of Concerned Scientists and other environmental groups.

Sister Marion is an internationalist. In addition to her interest in Kenya’s experiments in afforestation, she has been on a Darwinian pilgrimage to the Galapagos, studied rain forests in Costa Rica, done environmental studies courses in Scandinavia, spent three weeks in the old Soviet Union on issues of importance to Soviet women, frequently served as a host for foreign visitors, and is especially committed to problems of the Third World. Hence, Sister Marion is truly one of the CITIZENS of the world and takes her responsibilities seriously.

Hence, Sister Marion is not only deserving of our praise based on her record of service, but she is an excellent role model for neophyte biology educators as to the satisfactions of a career of dedicated service in college biology teaching.