

A Tribute to H. George Fredrickson

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H. George Frederickson died on July 24, 2020, one week after his 86th birthday, surrounded by his wife and children. George was known for many things including his intellectual leadership in public administration, his building of important institutions and programs, his dedication to social equity, his leadership within the Academy, and his mentorship of many around the world.

George was born in Twin Falls, Idaho, and often credited his work with his siblings at the family drive-in and Frederickson's Fine Candy and Ice Cream for instilling in him both a strong work ethic and a talent for working collaboratively with others. After two years at Brigham Young University, George traveled to South Africa for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, witnessing apartheid first-hand which greatly influenced his future work on social justice and equity. After earning a Ph.D. at USC, he taught at the University of Maryland, Syracuse University, Indiana University, and the University of Missouri, often serving as department chair or associate dean, building new programs along the way.

Amidst the civil unrest and turmoil of the late 1960s, much of it relating racial injustice and inequality, there was a sense among many younger scholars that the field of public administration was increasingly out of touch. As a response, at the 1967 conference of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), George and several others organized a parallel conference and called it “the Unconvention”. By the end of the conference, the Unconvention drew more participants than in the regularly scheduled ASPA panels. Shortly after the Unconvention, Dwight Waldo recommended George and his fellow Maxwell School assistant professors, Harry Lambright and Frank Marini, clarify their criticisms of public administration. Waldo worked with the young professors to organize the first Minnowbrook Conference in 1968. George carried on the tradition by organizing the second Minnowbrook conference twenty years later in 1988.

George was President of Eastern Washington University for over ten years and was particularly proud of how the university grew from a small regional college into a full-service university with strong science, humanities, and sports programs under his leadership. He returned to full-time scholarship when he was appointed the Edwin O. Stene Distinguished Professor of Public Administration at the University of Kansas (KU), a position in which he thrived for twenty-five years. He was a visiting scholar at Oxford University and traveled to Korea over fifty times to forge linkages with scholars there.

While at KU George founded and edited the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* (JPART). JPART flourished under George's editorial leadership and is now one of the top journals in public administration. In addition, George helped create and run the Public Management Research Association (PMRA), establishing the world headquarters of PMRA at KU. He started the *Journal of Public Administration Education* and wrote a monthly column for *PA Times* with insightful perspectives on current events and inspiring ideas for public administration.

George served as President of ASPA in 1977-78 and was selected as a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration in 1979. He energetically served in these organizations for several decades. In addition to serving on the NAPA Board of Directors for six years, George chaired the Membership committee, was a member of the Board Executive committee, and served on the Fellows Nominating and the Board Officers committees. An enthusiastic member of several Standing Panels, George was a founding member of the Standing Panel for Social Equity in Governance. He was particularly active on this panel, attending and contributing for many years to the Social Equity conferences. Noting that the body of Fellows was decidedly lacking in diversity, he and Phil Rutledge agreed that together they would annually nominate outstanding minorities for membership in the Academy. Later, he argued successfully for opening NAPA membership to individuals from outside the United States. Much of the progress that the Academy made on diversifying its membership can be traced to these efforts.

A gifted writer and thinker who excelled in both breadth and depth, George always described himself as "a public administration generalist." He published hundreds of articles and dozens of books in his 50-year career. As Brint Milward put it at George's festschrift, "George Frederickson was a larger than life figure in public administration. . . His reputation was formidable as a slayer of tired shibboleths and normative assumptions that justified the status quo." His most influential works include *The Spirit of Public Administration*, *The New Public Administration*, and *Public Administration and Social Equity*. George developed a new theory arguing that a "third pillar" of public administration – social equity - should have the same status as economy and efficiency. To paraphrase Fran Berry's comments at the time of George's retirement, no one has had a greater impact on our professional field of public administration than George.

Over a long and distinguished career, George was frequently recognized for his achievements. Not merely items for George's curriculum vitae, these honors were meaningful to him and reflected lasting contributions in scholarship and civic engagement. He was the recipient of the Dwight Waldo, John Gaus, Charles Levine, and Donald Stone Lecture awards, as well as the Order of Meritorious Diplomatic Service Award from the Republic of Korea. Today the best article award at ASPA's *PA Times* is called "The George Frederickson Award," as is the PMRA lifetime achievement award.

George promoted the best in people and helped many achieve their best. He served as "major professor" to those "at home" but also to many who did not attend Kansas, Syracuse, Indiana or Missouri. So many scholars and leaders claim George as one of their mentors though they were never formally his student. As one who saw the potential in every individual -- and the value in cultivating that potential -- George helped the public administration profession get stronger and

be richer. His firm commitment to social equity and justice, where he both “talked the talk” and “walked the walk,” helped many individuals but just as importantly, made the academy a more welcoming place for faculty and students of all races, creeds and approaches. Undoubtedly this has made our society better in the long run and improved how government functions.

George was an inspiration in how to take big ideas and manifest them. His organizing efforts generated an incredible amount of social capital and positive externalities, often through actions that reflected his good humor and sometimes mischievous personality. George was simultaneously courtly and wry. He was unfailingly gentlemanly but never made it hard to discern when he thought someone would be better served keeping their thoughts to themselves. His good sense of humor was somewhat hidden and often deployed as he contributed on multiple fronts: To better government, to a more thoughtful and rigorous public administration field, to better scholarship and a network of scholars, to collaborative interaction among practitioners and scholars, and to deep personal friendships based on caring concern and help. We are so much richer for having H. George Frederickson as a colleague and friend.

George, congratulations on a life well lived. You were, and will continue to be, an inspiration to all of us. And now that you are gone, it is time, as you always advised us, to “move ahead boldly.”