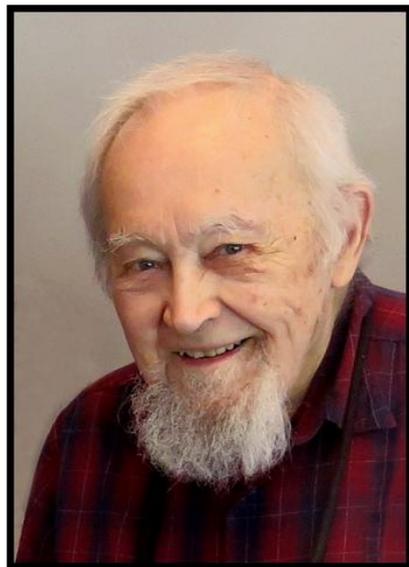


IN LOVING MEMORY OF

**EUGENE M. ROARK**

MARCH 25, 1931 - OCTOBER 24, 2015



Madison - Eugene M. Roark, age 84, passed away on Saturday, October 24 at University of Wisconsin Hospitals. He was born on March 25, 1931 in Madison, Wisconsin to Professor Raymond J. Roark and Margaret Mott Roark. Gene attended Randall Elementary School, West High and in 1953 received a B.S. degree in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin. After graduation he received a commission in the U.S. Army and was discharged in 1955 as a first lieutenant. From 1957-59 he studied Conservation Journalism for a M.S. degree. Gene worked for the Department of Natural Resources for many years in several capacities, and for a number of years was in charge of the state tourism program.

Gene had a lifelong interest in nature and the environment. He was a proud Wisconsinite and was devoted to preserving its natural landscape and beauty. He was involved with many environmental organizations and often held positions of responsibility as a volunteer. He joined the Madison Audubon Society as a teenager, and was active when they purchased Goose Pond many years later. In the 1950s He joined the Dane County Conservation League and became a board member and later president. Over the years he became an active member of many organizations, typically as an officer, trustee, committee chairman, newsletter editor or as a liaison with the Wisconsin Legislature. These organizations include, among many others: Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Natural Heritage Land Trust, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, The Prairie Enthusiasts, Gathering Waters, and The Nature Conservancy.

Gene was most proud of his efforts to help establish The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin along with Dr. Hugh Iltis and Dr. Joseph Hickey in 1960. He served on the Conservancy's Board of Trustees for 24 years from 1960 to 1984. He was Chairman of the Board for three years from 1978-81. Twice he accompanied the Advisory Group to the Bosawas Natural Resource Reserve in Nicaragua to see the project and meet with conservation partners as part of the Conservancy's global work. The Wisconsin Chapter awarded Gene its highest honor, the Outstanding Achievement Award in 1998.

The Wisconsin Woodland Owners recognized his contributions with the Distinguished Service Award in 2002. The Natural Heritage Land Trust recognized his service on the Board of Directors from 1998 to 2005 and his participation on the stewardship Committee. Gathering Waters honored him with the 2010 Land Conservation Leadership Award. He received a number of additional awards and recognition. Gene also supported many national and international conservation groups.

Gene's interests stretched far and wide. He supported organizations devoted to human rights, social justice, peace, cultural activities, the arts, museums, historical organizations, American Indian groups, progressive government, public radio and television, and many other worthwhile groups and causes.

Gene and his wife and two sons own a tree farm in Richland County where they practice sustainable usage. They have planted thousands of trees, created a small prairie, encourage wildlife, and continue with the fight against invasive species. A few years ago they received recognition from the Richland County Agriculture Committee for their commitment to good stewardship of the land.

On May 2, 2015 Gene was honored with his election into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame for his commitment to our state's natural resources. This was a fitting tribute to his lifelong work and love of the land. Gene was pleased to have family and many friends attend the induction ceremony in Stevens Point.

Gene is survived by his wife Jean of 62 years and their sons David and Michael. David and his wife Sally and their daughters Rachael and Taylor live in Reading, England. Grandsons John Roark and Michael Andrew Roark and great grandchildren Ilan Roark and Emilia Roark live in San Francisco. Gene and Jean's son Michael Raymond Roark lives in Madison. Gene is also survived by his sister Nancy Roark of Lodi, Wis. and Berkeley, Calif. and his brother William Roark of Madison.

Additional family members include Margaret and Jim Hastings of Kalamazoo, Mich. and Connie and Fred Perra of Lakewood, Wash. Gene is also survived by nieces Nancy, Laura, and Carol and nephew Jeffrey, grandnieces Jenna, Carly and Aleah, and longtime friend Robert Holland. He was predeceased by his two cousins, George Martin, Jr. and William Martin, and a brother-in-law, James Oliverson and a nephew, Thomas Oliverson.

A gathering of friends to remember Gene will be held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum, 1207 Seminole Hwy., Madison, WI 53711 from 4p.m. until 6p.m. on Friday, November 6.

The family wishes to thank the staff at University Hospitals for their kind and excellent care of Gene. Donations in Gene's name may be made to The Nature Conservancy, 633 West Main Street, Madison, WI 53703.

Cress Funeral & Cremation Service  
3610 Speedway Road, Madison  
608-238-3434

## TRIBUTES

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**Michael Gehrke, Winter, WI** wrote on Oct 29, 2015:

*"Serving with Gene on the WWOA Board of Directors, he surely will be missed. Gene will never be forgotten in my prayers and thoughts. He was the backbone of Wisconsin's environmental movement. May he rest in peace."*

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**John Neu** wrote on Oct 29, 2015:

*"Jean, My sympathies to you and your family. It has been a long time since I knew you and Gene, when you worked in Memorial Library, but I have fond memories of you both. I hope you are well. I live in the northwoods now, and don't get back to Madison often, but I will think of you on Gene's memorial day. John Neu"*

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**Todd Ambs** wrote on Oct 27, 2015:

*"A gentle soul with a fierce love for our planet and the creatures on it. What a gift he was to our state."*

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**Jim Welsh** wrote on Oct 26, 2015:

*"Gene was one of my conservation mentors. Once, when I was doing conservation planning for TNC in the Baraboo Hills, I put forward what I thought was an ambitious conservation plan to protect the hills, draws, and hollows. Gene reviewed the plan and told me, "Good job, Jim, but you've got to think big!" "*

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**Katie Beilfuss** wrote on Oct 26, 2015:

*"Gene inspired everyone he interacted with to be better people, myself included. Sending love and support to Jean and the family."*

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**Kelly Kearns** wrote on Oct 26, 2015:

*"I worked with Gene for all of my professional career. He was always an inspirational mentor and a joy to work with. He will be greatly missed. "*

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**Bill Lunney** wrote on Oct 25, 2015:

*"Gene was a dedicated and tireless leader for preserving our natural resources, a trusted colleague and good friend. We will miss him."*

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**Becky Abel** wrote on Oct 25, 2015:

*"I am honored to have known him. And so sad. The world has lost such a kind, amazing man. My thoughts are with Jean and the family. Becky Abel"*

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**Dr. Dave Downs** wrote on Oct 25, 2015:

*"Gene was, definitely, "one of the good guys". My wife Bonnie and I will miss him at WWOA functions. Dr. Dave Downs"*

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**Brent Christianson** wrote on Oct 25, 2015:

*"Our sympathies; Gene was a kind, gentle and wise neighbor - I will remember him tending his yard and always having a kind word for everyone -- human and canine. He was a blessing - Brent and Becky"*

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**Bob Elliker** wrote on Oct 25, 2015:

*"Dear Family, I was saddened to read of Gene's passing. He was such a good steward of the earth! I remember him from being on the board at the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame Foundation! Bob Elliker - an Ike from Stevens Point"*

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