



Eugene Decker

April 15, 1930 - April 26, 2024

Eugene “Gene” Decker passed away on April 26, 2024, at the age of 94. He was born on April 15, 1930, in Columbus, Ohio, to Ruth and Chester Decker. He graduated from Emlenton High School in Pennsylvania and then attended Pennsylvania State University where he earned a B.S. in Forestry in 1952 and an M.S. in Forestry (Wildlife Management) in 1955. In 2001, he was honored as the alumni of the year by Penn State’s Department of Ecosystem Science and Management for teaching and mentoring generations of students and professionals around the world.

He married Sarah Lobban in 1961 and moved with her to a log cabin in Montana where he worked for the US Forest Service and watched grizzly bears at the dump for entertainment. They moved to Loveland in 1967 when Gene joined the College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University (CSU). He was a professor of wildlife biology for more than 31 years in the Department of Fishery and Wildlife Biology. He taught courses in natural resources, public relations, wildlife management, and international wildlife resources.

Professor Decker served as a mentor to international graduate and undergraduate students from across Africa, Iran, Indonesia, Germany, Australia, and Nepal. His international efforts in wildlife conservation included work in Iran, Egypt, and Africa. He received many awards including The

Wildlife Society Conservation Education Award in 1983 for the Colorado wildlife education program developed under his direction, and the Best Teacher Award from the CSU Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society in 1999. After retiring, he was honored with emeritus professor status. He continued to guest lecture at CSU and Front Range Community College for the rest of his life. He noted that few of the students even knew an octogenarian and even fewer had ever been taught by a nonagenarian.

He spent extensive periods of time developing, coordinating, and conducting training programs in conservation and in communications/public relations. This includes the well-known, weeklong Wildlife Management Short Course at CSU; ecology study tours of east, central, and southern Africa; and a course in effective personal presentations offered annually for The Wildlife Society.

In addition to teaching at CSU, he spent summers at the American Wilderness Leadership School in Jackson, Wyoming, where he taught environmental education and how to fly fish for decades. He led over thirty ecology study tours of Iran and east, central, and southern Africa as well as tours to Patagonia, Australia, and New Zealand. In 1974, he moved to Kenya with his family to work with the United Nations Development Program at various national parks, primarily in Amboseli. He also supported wildlife conservation efforts in Iran, Egypt, Honduras, and throughout the US.

Gene traveled the world with his binoculars and fly rod, with a special love for the trout streams in New Zealand. He tracked big horn sheep in the Rockies, caught piranha on a fly in Bolivia, hunted grouse in Scotland, snowshoed in Hokkaido, Japan, to see Siberian swans, and took his Brittany Spaniels bird hunting all over the West.

He built community and connection wherever he went. With his wife, Sally, he was a founding member of the Foothills Unitarian Church, an active member

of the Namaqua Unitarian Church and a key participant in his neighborhood's "Gab on the Slab."

His military service includes active duty in 1952 and active reserve duty from 1953 to 1960; he was honorably discharged as captain in the Army in 1962.

He continues to be an inspiration to friends, former students and colleagues, and family. He lived his life with integrity, a commitment to teaching, daily dog walks, and a dry sense of humor. He was predeceased by his wife of 56 years, Sarah Lobban Decker, and his brother Kenneth, and is survived by his three daughters, Katherine Gayle, Diane Lapierre, and Martha Decker, and seven grandchildren. He has finally crossed the Rubicon.

A celebration of his life will be held on Monday June 3rd, at Lory Student Center Grand Ballroom at CSU at 10:00 am

Donations in his memory can be made to scholarship funds established in his honor at CSU:

In 2011, the Eugene Decker Game Management Fellowship (63105) and in 2020, the Eugene Decker Veterans Scholarship (79855) were established to support students in the Warner College of Natural Resources and to commemorate the career and life of Professor Eugene Decker. In lieu of flowers, donations to these funds can be sent to the Colorado State University Foundation at P.O. Box 1870, Fort Collins, CO 80522. Please include Eugene Decker's name in the memo line. You can also give online by visiting <https://give.colostate.edu/campaigns/43503/donations/new>. Click on "Additional Designations" to find the funds in Eugene Decker's name and include his name under "Tribute" to make the gift in his memory.

Or to Ducks Unlimited: <https://www.ducks.org/get-involved/memorial-giving>

Condolences to the family may be shared at bohlenderfuneralchapel.com.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN 3. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (MT)

Lory Student Center Grand Ballroom
500 University Avenue
Fort Collins, CO 80521

Tribute Wall



“ *Bohlender Funeral Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Eugene Decker*



Bohlender Funeral Chapel - May 30, 2024 at 01:03 PM

MW

“ *Mr Decker was our 7th grade science teacher at El Camino Junior High School. When we get together, we still discuss him. He gifted us with a love of science. We would ride our bikes to Waller Park, take organisms from the lake, and cut appendages off to see if they grew back. Good times! I'm a college professor now and find myself trying to light a fire under my students, in the same way he did. I wish I could have thanked him. Myrna Weare*

Myrna Weare - October 17, 2024 at 01:09 AM

YS

“ I am an Iranian citizen and a physicist at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Basic Sciences in Zanzan. While I never had the chance to meet the late Professor Eugen Decker, I am aware that in the 1950s he collaborated with the late Eskandar Firouz, the founder of Iran's Department of Environment, from conceptualization to its physical realization. Eugen spent a significant amount of time in Iran, where he trained personnel, both locally and later at the University of Colorado. As an Iranian who cares deeply about the environment, I sincerely appreciate what he has contributed to my beloved country. May his soul rest in peace.

Yousef Sobouti - June 24, 2024 at 05:46 AM

BS

“ I was fortunate to have Gene on my graduate school committee for my master's in wildlife at CSU from 1971-1974. I will always be thankful for his support, guidance and perspective to my course work and particularly my thesis on "Hunter Behavior, Attitudes and Philosophies. Gene, Terry Cacek and I shared many wonderful pheasant hunting trips to Ender's reservoir in western Nebraska and a very memorable bighorn sheep hunt on Pikes Peak. His love for people and wildlife was a constant blessing and inspiration the ten years I was employed with Nebraska Game and Parks and when I returned to operating the family farm. His influence is a part of why my two sons, and I returned 90 acres of land back to native grasses and wetland.

Gene's teaching and mentoring expanded my mind to better appreciate the words of Norris Alfred, past owner and editor of Polk Progress in Nebraska: "We are born not to subdue but to coexist with our world. We were not born to change the natural world, but to accept it as our temporary heritage. We need to take large doses of humility to inspire gratitude for the opportunity that our birth gave us. We must learn to appreciate the wonders that surround us, the mysteries that inspire us; and the love of life that sustains us."

Gene's legacy lives on in the land and all the lives he touched.

My deepest sympathy

Ben Schole

Ben Schole - June 05, 2024 at 12:40 PM

WA

“ Gene made an exceptional contribution to individuals interested in wildlife and wildlife itself. His week-long Wildlife Management Short Course at CSU, his ecology study tours of Africa, and his dedication to students were especially important. It was a pleasure to provide a guest lecture at several of Gene's short courses. Gene engendered our interest in visiting Africa numerous times by providing guidance on where to visit, how to visit, and important contacts. Gene was a great friend that we will thoroughly miss. Bill and Susie Andelt

William Andelt - June 02, 2024 at 10:42 PM

SK

“ I had the opportunity to go with Gene on the 1980 southwest US wildlife field course. I was one of the drivers and when my co-driver got sick, Gene covered for him some (not recommended). That same summer I went with him on the African Game Management course in Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, and Swaziland. It was a summer that I will never forget, and he provided an opportunity that helped me as a wildlife professional for decades after. I enjoyed his sense of humor and respected his blunt honesty. He will be missed.
Steve Keefer

Steven D Keefer - June 02, 2024 at 06:20 PM

JL

“ So sorry for your loss Katie, Martha, Diane and your families. He made so many contributions to the world. A life well lived.

Jennifer LaFleur - June 01, 2024 at 04:43 PM

PK

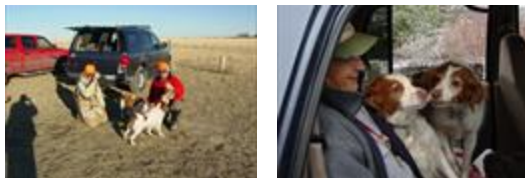
“ 13 files added to the album *Adventures with Gene*



Peter Kummerfeldt - June 01, 2024 at 01:26 PM

MS

“ *Katie, Diane, and Martha. I am so glad I had the pleasure to be experience your family throughout my life and especially the opportunity I had for Gene to take be on my first Duck Hunt which started our special hunting trips. Turns out that I probably have more time in Motels with Gene and a couple of Brittany Spaniels than have with my own family. Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana. I had a blast with Gene. I was so sad to hear of his passing but grateful I got to see him at his birthday just a few days prior. Looks like Tripp and I will be hunting on our own now but Gene will always be with us in Spirit. God bless you all and Godspeed - Gene.*



Mark Sheets - May 31, 2024 at 11:28 PM

SG

“Katie, Diane, and Martha, I was so sorry to hear that your dad passed away. It was always interesting to hear about his adventures and teaching experiences. I especially remember the year he took you girls and your mom to Africa, when you were in grade school. What an adventure that was! My thoughts and prayers are with you and your families during this difficult time.
Love, Sara Simcoe Girton

Sara Girton - May 27, 2024 at 06:17 PM

JA

“Dear Katherine, Diane and Martha,
I have learned this evening that Eugene has gone to his last campfire. I know he will be regaling my other departed friends who knew him about trout fishing and wing shooting over Brittany spaniels.
For many years I talked conservation at his evening “EcoRaps” with his students, both in Zululand and at Pilanesberg. I also visited with him and Sally at Loveland and spoke to a class at CSU.
You can be justly proud that he has left the world a better place and set a wonderful example for others to follow.
He was a great friend and mentor to many in Africa and we appreciate here the legacy he left.
You can be rightly proud of your “Old Man”,
A big Hug from the Bushveld to each of you,
Love,
Jeremy Anderson

Jeremy Anderson - May 24, 2024 at 01:33 PM

DL

Thanks for sharing your memories, Jeremy. He touched so many lives!
- Diane

Diane Lapierre - May 28, 2024 at 11:15 AM

RD

“ Gene was a great neighbor to us. We were very fortunate to get to know him so well in the short number of years that he lived on Don Fox Circle. His knowledge of wild life impressed all of us during our Gab on the Slab gatherings. If I was outside in the mornings and I heard a woof - woof, I knew it was Gene walking Sarah's dog. He had a great life and I know that he touched many people's lives. He will be missed by all of us. Our thoughts and prayers are with Gene, his three daughters (Katie, Diane & Martha), and Sarah & Levi.

Randy & Brenda Davis

Randy R Davis - May 22, 2024 at 07:39 PM

AH

“ My sincerest condolences to Katie, Martha, Diane and the entire family. I was so very saddened to hear of this loss. Gene was my mentor and such an inspiration to me when I first started my Masters in Wildlife up at CSU. I shall always remember his kindness, infectious enthusiasm, and deep love of the outdoors-- I'll never be able to repay him for all he did to help me when I first arrived in Fort Collins. I hope he's tickling trout to his heart's delight now -- God Bless him and God Bless you all. With my very fondest wishes, always, Amanda Hughes-Horan

Amanda Hughes-Horan - May 20, 2024 at 05:33 PM

BC

“ I was honored when Gene invited me to accompany him on his 30th trip (wow!) to New Zealand. I met some wonderful friends of his while there. We didn't need lodging the entire time we were there as his life long buddies were more than pleased to have us stay with them. They treated me like family. They also guided us on trout fishing trips all over the South island. When I operated Elkhorn Fly Shop (2005-2016) Gene would visit often. He procured his fly tying tools and materials from the shop to use when teaching fly tying at CSU. Gene was the sort of friend that made fly fishing more fun and interesting!

Brian Chavet - May 19, 2024 at 05:15 PM

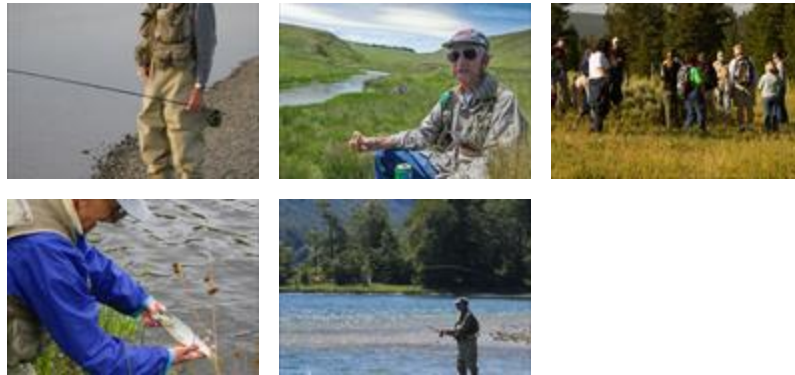
MC

“ I was a graduate student in the 1970's and took several courses from Gene. I attended a National Wildlife Society meeting where both Gene and I gave talks. I had prepared my slides and talk using Gene's guidelines (not too much info on each slide, etc.), and Gene gave his talk about those very guidelines. I felt sorry for the unfortunate fellow whose talk followed Gene's because he had committed most of the errors Gene warned about, and he didn't have any time to change things! I later became good friends with Gene through Warren and Genny Garst. They had mugs made for each of us with our names on them.

Mary Jean Currier - May 19, 2024 at 08:26 AM

PK

“ 6 files added to the album *Adventures with Gene*



Peter Kummerfeldt - May 12, 2024 at 11:31 PM

KW

“ Gene loved teaching! Here he is teaching CSU students how to tie flies.



Ken Wilson - May 06, 2024 at 06:33 PM

DI

“ 1 file added to the album *Adventures with Gene*



Diane - May 06, 2024 at 05:05 PM