

## Biography of Nell I. Mondy



Long time GWIS member and friend, Dr. Nell Mondy, passed away Thursday, August 25, 2005 in Ithaca, NY. Mondy was recognized worldwide for her research, which involved the study of plant biochemistry as it related to human nutrition and food, studying factors affecting the nutritive value and quality of potato tubers, a very important staple crop around the world. She studied potato constituents such as ascorbic acid, protein, lipids, minerals, phenols, and glycoalkaloids for the effect of fertilizer components (such as boron, zinc, magnesium, potassium and nitrogen) storage conditions, sprout inhibition, irradiation, processing, and packaging. Other research interests included the study of food safety as influenced by naturally-occurring toxicants such as glycoalkaloids and nitrates. Dr. Mondy's work on behalf of the potato industry resulted in an Honorary Life Membership in the Potato Association of America, the organization's highest honor.

Mondy's research at Cornell ranged from determining the availability of iron in frozen vegetables, the effect of sulfur dioxide on living cells, and naturally occurring toxicants in food to the biochemical and nutritional aspects of fresh and processed potatoes. But she also engaged in special projects at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Two of Mondy's well known books are *Experimental Food Chemistry*, published by AVI Publishing Co., Westport, CT in 1980 and *You Never Fail Until You Stop Trying: The Story of a Pioneer Woman Chemist* published in 2001 by Dorrance Publishing Co., Pittsburgh, PA.

She was a committed humanitarian who spent a great deal of time in Africa, including a 1983-84 stint as a visiting scientist working on the chemical properties of yams and cassava at the Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria. While there, she introduced soybeans and processing techniques for soy milk and other soy products to a children's home where there was much nutritional deficiency. In 1987 she prepared a proposal on potato marketing that led to the formation of the Agriculture Research Service-National Potato Council (ARS/NPC) National Potato Research Program. The program resulted in millions of dollars in research funds

being made available for the study of the quality and use of potatoes. An executive at one potato processing company wrote, "Your contributions to the body of potato research literature in the areas of nutrition and quality improvements, particularly in relation to glycoalkaloids and blackspot bruise, will be of lasting value and significance to the potato industry and consumers of potatoes everywhere."

Dr. Mondy is in the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, NY, and is listed in more than two dozen reference books, such as *Who's Who in America* and *Foremost Women in the Twentieth Century*. She is the namesake of the Nell I. Mondy Organic Chemistry Laboratory at Ouachita Baptist University, which also sponsors the Nell Mondy Lecture Series that brings experts in chemistry, food science and nutrition to that campus. Mondy also authored or co-authored more than 100 scientific publications. Mondy received her B.S. with honors at Ouachita Baptist University (1943); M.A. at Texas University (1945) and Ph.D. at Cornell (1953).

Dr. Mondy received numerous honors. In 1997 she was the first recipient of the Elizabeth Fleming Stier Award, selected by the New York Section of the Institute of Food Technologists. The award recognizes IFT members for their pursuit of humanitarian ideals and unselfish dedication that has resulted in significant contributions to the well-being of the food industry, academia, students, or the general public. She was an elected Fellow of the American Institute of Chemists, the Institute of Food Technologists, and the AAAS. In October 2000 she was honored at the Outstanding Alumni Banquet of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University. She was spotlighted in "2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 20th Century", published by the International biographical Centre, Cambridge, England. In 1960 she received the Distinguished Alumna Award from her alma mater, Ouachita Baptist College in Arkadelphia, AR, and in 1986, she was selected as one of 12 Ouachita alumni to receive the college's Centennial Achievement Award.

Nell loved travel, and journeyed to over 47 different countries as a visitor, lecturer, or consultant to research institutes, food companies, and universities, as near as Canada and as distant as the Ivory Coast, Peru, and Mauritius. She consulted on food processing behind the Iron Curtain in Warsaw in 1966. Her work at the R.T. French Co. developed new products and improved the flavor of Sloppy Joes and Hamburger Helper. Her research took her to visit lepers and malnourished children and experience a military coup in Nigeria. She once was lost by herself and on foot close to nightfall in Yogyakarta, Indonesia; and she photographed foreign food she didn't want to eat. She took pictures and made friends wherever she went; and her homewas an eclectic museum of international memorabilia.

Nell became a member of SDE-GWIS in her early days at Cornell, and served in all offices at Alpha Chapter. She served as National GWIS President in 1983-84, as well as on the Fellowships Committee before then and the International Relations Committee since. Of particular note to GWIS members, she gave a speech at the African Regional Seminar, Ivory Coast, on the role of scientific and engineering societies in development, that was reprinted in the Fall-Winter 1985 Bulletin. In

1986 she was awarded honorary membership in SDE-GWIS. Nell generously created the Nell I. Mondy Fellowship which is annually awarded by GWIS to help support the research of exceptional women who follow in her example, bringing the benefits of their science to society, especially in developing world. She also sponsored lectureships at Ouachita Baptist University and Williams Baptist College, in her name and those of her parents.

In her later years, Nell turned a physical assault in her home (by a young woman she had hired) into service in a new area. Her humanitarian and problem-solving energies were directed since 1996 to working on the Victims Services Subcommittee and the Criminal Justice Advisory Board of Tompkins County, to which she was elected by the County Board of Representatives.

Nell Mondy will be missed by many.

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