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Richard H. Goodwin 1910 – 2007
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Memorial Minute

In 1944 Dick Goodwin was 34 and happily working as an Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of Rochester. He was recognized as an exciting teacher and was developing a national reputation as a creative young scholar in the field of experimental plant development. He would be up for promotion in 1945 and was being groomed to be the next department chair. In the spring of that same year Connecticut College President Dorothy Schaffter faced the challenge of replacing Professor George Avery, Botany Department Chair and Arboretum Director, who had resigned to become Director of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. No one today is sure exactly how she heard about Dick, but we do know that in June she contacted him about the position – and that his initial response was rather luke-warm. We also don't have any details on the summer's negotiations, but on September 5, 1944 the College announced the appointment of Dr. Richard H. Goodwin, BA, MA, and PhD from Harvard, as Professor of Botany, Department Chair, and Arboretum Director. Rarely in the history of the College has such a presidential bet paid off so handsomely.

Dick's botanical research was laboratory based and he arrived at Connecticut College with a strong appreciation for the importance of preserving natural systems – and with the growing recognition that the most effective way of reaching this goal was often outright ownership – simply buy the land. In his new position as Arboretum Director, he used his considerable talent, wit, charm, and energy to this end. Before Dick's appointment the main campus was about 125 acres and Arboretum included just 79 acres, across from the Williams Street entrance plus the 10 acre parcel just north of the campus on Benham Avenue. Over the next three decades Arboretum holdings would increase by over 340 acres and other College held open space by more than 100 – *all* the direct result of Dick's work. His approach would be to identify important pieces of land, solicit potential donors for part of the purchase price, then bring the package to the President and Board, convincing both to pick up the difference and take title. Early on in this enterprise he received a sternly worded letter from President Katherine Blunt insisting that he stop this free-lance fund raising as it might be diverting potential donors from contributing to larger institutional goals. (This Presidential response might ring familiar to some faculty today...) Fortunately for Connecticut College, by the time he received the letter Dick had both tenure, and a dedication to the principal that it is easier to gain forgiveness than it is to get permission.

The diverse landscapes protected by the Arboretum have been a key factor in the development of our programs in botany, biology and environmental studies. But this land has been critical to Connecticut College far beyond its impact on a few academic majors. To get a visual sense of this legacy walk past the formal plantings on Williams Street follow one of the

trails back down the ravine, or take a stroll through the fields and forests up Bolles Road, north of Gallows Lane, or simply stand at the end of the bridge to the Athletic Center and look down toward the Thames. All the green you see to the east and north, from Route 32 down to the river's edge, represent Dick's efforts. I will leave it to your imagination to think what Connecticut College would be like were this not protected open space. Today College lands, Arboretum and central campus, together cover about 750 acres; 430 of these, a bit over 57%, are the direct result of the vision and dedication of Dick Goodwin.

In the two decades following his appointment Dick Goodwin expanded the breadth of his research and published nearly twenty scientific papers. He had collaborators from California to Denmark, and his work was widely recognized for its technical ingenuity and scientific elegance. During this time Dick also became increasingly active in conservation and land preservation beyond Connecticut College.

In the late 40s he had pulled together half a dozen colleagues from across the US who shared his concerns about natural area preservation and management. These scientists were the foundation of what was to become the Nature Conservancy. TNC was organized in 1951, focusing on protecting the Mains River Gorge and a few other pieces in NY and New England. When he was elected for his first term as Conservancy president in 1956 there were just 2,000 members, two state chapters – Connecticut and New York. An underpaid executive director with a home office was the only full time employee; the annual budget was less than \$10,000, and there were no holdings outside the Northeast. By 1958, at the end of this term, TNC was in the process of acquiring a 3000 acre, \$100,000 preserve in northern California, an Ohio chapter had been established, and the number of reserves had more than doubled.

The big turn for both the Conservancy and Dick came in 1964 when he was again elected national president. In accepting that office Dick made a "life decision"; he turned over the Arboretum directorship to Bill Niering, shut down his research program, and began his second term as TNC president. Conservation through land preservation would replace botanical research as the focus of his non-teaching professional efforts. He was to be the Conservancy's last unpaid president. Under his leadership, the Conservancy developed and adopted innovative business models and tactics for conservation that revolutionized the practice of preserving open spaces. At the same time he organized, championed, and won a \$550,000 Ford Foundation grant to support transition of TNC's staff from all-volunteer to paid professional. This was a task requiring persistence, vision and considerable political skill with the Conservancy's sometimes contentious board of trustees. His advocacy was also critical in expanding the organization's focus from just the U.S. to the entire planet. Steven J. McCormick, current president and CEO of the Conservancy said this of Dick:

"It is true that the actions of a few can change the world for many. [This] could not be more true than when speaking of Dick Goodwin. His visionary leadership in land conservation established the foundations for not only the Conservancy, but the modern conservation movement."

Up to his retirement in 1976 Dick remained an enthusiastic, dedicated, and imaginative teacher. In addition to his upper division offerings in Plant Physiology he regularly gave lecture

series and took on laboratory sections in the team-taught General Biology and General Botany. Thirty years of alumni - irrespective of their undergraduate majors - consistently recount how much his courses now mean to them. His most lasting academic legacy, however, was the establishment in 1969 of the major in Human Ecology. In the 1960s he and Bill Niering concluded that the complex problems revolving around issues of conservation and environmental protection could not be solved by science alone; effective policy and action required people with a strong knowledge base in both natural and social sciences. They also saw that American higher education did not have the interdisciplinary vision to address this deficiency – so why not break the mold and start such a program at Connecticut College? In the spring of 1968 the faculty approved the new interdisciplinary Program in Human Ecology and the majors began signing up in 1969. As a footnote, one of the first students to graduate with a degree in Human Ecology is now the president of our board of trustees. Human Ecology changed its name to Environmental Studies fifteen years ago and it is now the most heavily elected interdisciplinary major at Connecticut College.

In 1970 Dick negotiated an agreement with President Shain: he would go part-time if the College would replace him with a full time assistant professor of plant physiology – saving the College a bundle of money and allowing Dick to put even more of his efforts towards conservation. One result of that deal was that you got me for 37 years. Another one, and much more significant, is that we *all* will have in perpetuity the Conservancy's Burnham Brook Preserve. Starting out with a 47 acre gift from Dick and his wife Ester in 1960, today Burnham Brook includes over 1000 acres of largely intact woodland in East Haddam and Salem, assembled by Dick over the past three decades, one parcel at a time. In July of this year, just after he died, Dick's long-time goal of connecting Burnham Brook to the 860 acre Devil's Hopyard State Park, was achieved with the acquisition of a 126 acre piece bounding both properties.

In 1984, in recognition of Dick's multiple contributions to both the college – and the rest of the planet – he was awarded the Connecticut College Medal. Dick was an outstanding scientist, the conservationist of his generation, an exemplary teacher, and a colleague, mentor, and wise friend without peer. I'll close with a quote from Oakes Ames' statement at Dick's College medal ceremony: "One could say of Dr. Goodwin what a plaque at St. Paul's Cathedral in London says of Christopher Wren, 'If you seek his monument, look around you.' Stand in the Arboretum. As far as the eye can see, from Mamacoke Island to the old Burdick plot, to the newly acquired Prince tract [today the Niering Tract], always in view is some cherished land which would not now be part of the College except for Dick Goodwin's devotion."

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