

John E. Kinsella, Nutrition: Davis

1938-1993

Professor

Dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

During his brief tenure (1990-1993) as our dean, John Kinsella guided the UC Davis College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences through some of the most challenging times in its history. Under his intellectual leadership and guidance, the College faculty achieved consensus on a visionary academic plan that placed agricultural and environmental sciences within the broader context of the use of natural resources and service to society. The College continues to value his wisdom as we implement the strategies that he devised to foster this interdisciplinary model.

John was a leading researcher in lipid biochemistry as well as the physical chemistry of food proteins. John's initial training as a lipid biochemist laid the groundwork for his true love throughout his scientific career. For three decades his was one of the most productive laboratories relating the composition of dietary fats to cellular functions. His restless imagination also recognized the lack of fundamental information relating the structure of food proteins to their functions in processed foods, and spurred another entire research program that rapidly became known as one of the leading protein functionality laboratories in the world. The impact of John's research has been felt throughout the food industry--in the evolution of dietary recommendations, in increasing use of monounsaturated oils as beneficial food ingredients, in a better understanding of food ingredient functionality, and in the suitability of particular proteins for novel applications.

After receiving his bachelor's degree in natural/agricultural sciences in Dublin, Ireland, in 1961, John went to graduate school at Pennsylvania State University, where he received M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in biology and food chemistry in 1965 and 1967, respectively. He joined the faculty at Cornell University in 1967. While at Cornell, John served as chair of the Department of Food Science from 1977 to 1985, associate director of the Institute of Food Science from 1977 to 1980, and director of the institute from 1980 to 1987. He was also designated the Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor of Food Biochemistry at Cornell in 1981, and selected as the General Foods Distinguished Professor of Food Science in 1984. John came to Davis as Dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences in 1990.

John applied the results of his research to improving the quality of foods and facilitating the formulation of new food products. Conspicuous for his breadth of perception, John was able to move an entire field with the power of his vision of food science as a basic science. He held several patents, published more than 500 papers, several book chapters and reviews, and was the author of one book and the editor of two others. John's work was recognized with numerous honors and awards. In 1976 he was the recipient of the Borden Award for his early research accomplishments in the biochemistry of milk lipid biosynthesis. He was named a Fulbright fellow in 1983, and was the recipient of the prestigious Babcock-Hart Award in 1987, the Atwater International Award from the USDA in 1988, and two awards from the American Chemical Society--the Advancement of Food Chemistry Award for Outstanding Research in Chemistry in 1990, and the Spencer Award, in 1991. In 1991, John was also presented with the Stephen S. Chang Award for distinguished research in lipid biochemistry.

Although John devoted his full energy and dedication at Davis to leading the College, he found time to continue his outstanding research in food biochemistry. While at Davis, he worked on the mechanism of lipid oxidation, the effects of natural antioxidants on the stability of food lipids, and on the nutritional

evaluation of different dietary polyunsaturated fatty acids. Just before his death, he and his colleagues published a paper suggesting that the French Paradox--reduced susceptibility to heart disease among those with high-cholesterol diets who regularly drink red wine--might be explained in part by the presence of antioxidants in grapes and wine.

In addition to being an outstanding scholar in every way, John Kinsella was a dedicated teacher and mentor to undergraduate and graduate students and faculty alike. As a scientist, John set high standards for himself and for others. As an administrator, he was always conscious of the need for programmatic and organizational change to bring the results of science and education to bear on the contemporary problems of agriculture and the larger society. He worked tirelessly for the good of our College, and for the students and public that it serves, thus reminding all of us of the inextricable connections among research, education, and public service. Although science and our College will long honor John Kinsella, the gifted researcher and administrator, we also remember John Kinsella the richly human person, devoted to his wife, Ruth Ann, and their four children. Modest to a fault, our smiling friend with twinkling eyes and cup of tea never forgot the importance of life's simple pleasures. All who saw John milk a cow, sing carols, quote a Yeats poem, or take part in a pick-up melodrama recognized his enjoyment of life. Sensitive to the viewpoints and needs of others, open to new ideas, but firm in his resolve of what was right, John Kinsella leaves a personal and professional legacy that we recall with admiration and gratitude.

Bruce German Susan Kaiser Michael Reid