



George K. York II

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July 1, 1925 - Jan. 30, 2008

Dr. George K. York II, who died at the age of 82 after a brief illness, was a food bacteriologist for University of California Cooperative Extension for over 35 years. He was an authority on food-borne infections, especially botulism, and taught food bacteriology at UC Davis and throughout California. He advised home canners and agricultural industries on safe practices in food preservation. He consulted on food safety in developing countries, especially in China and Egypt. The food and wine industries sought his expertise on safe microbiological practices in waste water disposal. He brought the practical principles of food preservation to rural and urban audiences.

George Kenneth York II was born in Tucson, Ariz. and raised in Sacramento. His father George K. York, an economic journalist, was the director of the California State Department of Farm News for many years. The younger George attended Sacramento High School, but was drafted into the US Marine Corps before he could graduate. As a member of the First Marine Division, he saw action in New Guinea. Transferred to the Fifth Marine Division, he was in the fourth wave of Marines to land on Iwo Jima. He was wounded on the 17th day of the battle and was evacuated to Hawaii, where he became a Japanese translator.

After the war, he entered Stanford University despite his lack of a high school diploma. He played baseball for Stanford, but was relegated to the junior varsity team because he had signed a professional contract while still in high school. He also was a professional musician, playing jazz trombone in the Fillmore District as a Stanford undergraduate. After graduation and a stint as a minor league relief pitcher, he entered the newly-formed graduate division at UC Davis in the Department of Food Science and Technology. He received his Ph.D. in 1960.

Dr. York stayed at UC Davis for the rest of his professional life. His specialized microbiological knowledge played an important part in the investigation of botulism outbreaks in the state. In the 1960s he consulted with fledgling Sonoma wineries on difficult problems of contaminated waste water. He was widely quoted in the media on topics of food safety and preservation. He took a special interest in pickling olives and canning tomatoes. Bill Graham took notice and invited him to participate in cultural festivals at the San Francisco Civic Auditorium. His recipe for a sourdough bread starter appeared in the 50th anniversary issue of Sunset magazine. His seminars on home processing and canning were over-subscribed.

After his 1993 retirement he freely offered his specialized knowledge to anyone who sought it. Throughout his life he was a proud Marine and a loyal Stanford alumnus. His wife Marian Holmes York predeceased him. He is survived by a sister, two sons, three daughters, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

His family asks that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the University of California Cooperative Extension Division of Agricultural and



Natural Resources, 1111 Franklin St. 6th Floor, Oakland CA 94607-5200.

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REMEMBER

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THE GUEST BOOK IS EXPIRED

"I'm deeply saddened by Georgie's passing. I could always count on him to make me smile. My life is richer for having known this wonderful, warm, caring man. My thoughts and prayers are with each of you at..."

-Sharen Chaffin

1 ENTRY

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GEORGE K. YORK II

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