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Forest and vineyards along the Mosel River, Germany. Photo by Eric Gevaert.
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Norman A. Berg passed away on March 18, 2008, just days after his 90th birthday.

Berg was born in Iowa and grew up on a family farm in Minnesota. He earned his BS from the University of Minnesota and began his career with the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in 1943. During World War II, he served in the US Marines. In 1956, he received a master’s degree in public administration from Harvard University. He became SCS associate administrator in 1969 and served as chief of the agency from 1979 until 1982.

Berg was an active member of the Soil Conservation Society of America/Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) his entire career. Since retirement, he continued to serve SWCS and American Farmland Trust. In 1990, he received the SWCS Hugh Hammond Bennett Award.

Norm Berg was a mentor to many and an inspiration to everyone who knew him. His leadership and life-long devotion to conservation are an enduring legacy. He profoundly influenced our thinking and our commitment to conserving, using, and cherishing our natural resources.

Wisdom is the ability to use knowledge. Norm had great ability to use a lifetime of knowledge, sowing it back into SWCS and its members. Norm Berg’s name is synonymous with Husband, Father, Veteran, Chief, Mentor, Advisor, and Conservationist. His legacy for SWCS will live on for centuries to come.

Peggie James
SWCS President

A true pioneer, Norm epitomized this leadership in his dedication to farmland protection and natural resource conservation. His quiet and determined manner will always be remembered. Although truly a hard act to follow, he would certainly want us not only to try but would challenge us to go further. Norm certainly taught me that there are no borders when it comes to our belief in and best management practices for protecting and conserving our shared resources.

Marsha Paley
SWCS Canadian Director & Berg Fellow

I want to offer a sincere thank you to Norm for his many gifts, large and small, to conservation. You were our last professional chief, the administrative leader of thousands of conservationists. Yet upon retiring you were happy to return to being a district commissioner in your home state because you recognized that conservation leadership needs to be built from the local level up. You never gave up in your efforts to persuade our elected leaders to see the importance of investing in conservation. Yet while walking the halls of Congress you also created the Berg Fellows because you recognized the most important investment we can make is in getting young professionals involved in soil and water conservation. You earned many honors and achieved a number of different roles across your long and distinguished career. Yet among all these honors and titles, somehow I know that being called a “conservationist” was the most important to you. So, thank you Norm for showing us all how to be, first and foremost, a conservationist. You did it with class, and you did it in an open and honest way that was appreciated by all who knew you.

Pete Nowak
SWCS Fellow

One special privilege of serving on the SWCS Board of Directors was the opportunity to get to know Norm Berg, a pioneer of our society and of the conservation movement. Norm was always gracious and insightful in his observations. We will miss him very much and appreciate so much the legacy he leaves behind—particularly in the Berg Fellows, a cadre of leaders touched by Norm’s vision.

Jean L. Steiner
SWCS At Large Director

Norm was an inspiration throughout my entire 25-year career. He was a teacher, a mentor, and a friend. Norm’s guidance and love for the land motivated an entire generation of dedicated conservationists. I am very thankful to have known Norm and to help further his conservation legacy.

Ross Braun
SWCS National Capital Chapter President & Berg Fellow

Throughout his life, Norm was seen as the epitome of the professionalism SWCS stands for. He was a dedicated, smart, tireless, and passionate conservationist. His life, his career, and his spirit point the way for the rest of us in the conservation profession. He reminds me every day that conservation is truly more than a job.

Craig Cox
SWCS Executive Director