

In Memoriam: Dr. Gary J. Pierce (1946-2011)



Gary Pierce Memoriam Dr. Gary J. Pierce 1946 – 2011

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our dear friend and teaching associate, Dr. Gary J. Pierce. His last day in this world was Easter Sunday, April 24, 2011, dying in his sleep that night of complications associated with rapidly advancing, lung cancer.

Gary remains in our collective memory as a gentle and caring soul with a first class intellect. He was a botanist by training and an outstanding wetland scientist by vocation. He was one of the

nation's top experts in wetland construction for mitigation purposes. His objectivity and personal integrity were evident, revealing themselves in unquestioned and exemplary professional ethics.

A pioneer in wetland construction, Gary was contracted annually by the Corps of Engineers to instruct in its own "Wetland Construction and Restoration" course. Gary was proud to have served as an instructor in that course every year since its inception in 1983. In the early days of wetland construction for mitigation, finding it difficult to obtain native plant species for his projects, Gary and Mary, his wife of 45 years and an excellent botanist in her own right, founded their own native plant nursery in Olean, NY. Gary had more "hands on" field experience growing native hydrophytic plants than anyone I've ever known.

When he needed a reference text specific to planning hydrology for constructing wetlands, there were none. So he researched and, with considerable effort, wrote his own, "Planning Hydrology for Constructed Wetlands" (1993). He's used this publication for years in his professional short courses on wetland construction related topics. Gary was 98% finished with a major rewrite of this text when illness overcame him. With Gary's endorsement, several of his wetland professional friends have agreed to put the finishing touches on this work and publish it for him.

Gary was a dedicated educator. A contrarian by nature, his unorthodox teaching style was startling to some but, in total, engaging and effective. It's hard for anyone who has ever attended one of Gary's training sessions to forget him and his frogs.

In his personal life, Gary was a devoted and caring husband and father. He had great concern for his fellow human beings and selflessly spent time helping others. He also had great concern for the natural resources, habitats, and the plants and animals with which he worked, especially frogs (thus the name of his consulting firm, Froghome Environmental). Gary had a joyous nature that infectiously uplifted those with whom he came in contact. We will miss him dearly.

--Charlie Newling and all of the Management and Staff of the Wetland Training Institute.