



Linda West Little, collecting water samples in the 1980s

LINDA WEST LITTLE

Breaking gender barriers, paving the way for student success

Linda West Little is no stranger to barricades – or scrambling over them. The first woman to receive a doctorate (in 1968) from the Gillings School’s Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering (ESE), she became the department’s first woman faculty member in 1970.

In the decade following, she conducted industrial waste research at UNC-Chapel Hill and the Research Triangle Institute and served as administrative judge with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s Atomic Safety and Licensing Board. Little was one of three judges who conducted hearings on the restart of Three Mile Island Unit 1 after the catastrophic accident at Unit II in 1979.

In 1983, she was named executive director of the N.C. Governor’s Waste Management Board, established to develop facilities for handling low-level radioactive and other hazardous wastes produced by industry, medicine, utilities and other sources. In 1990, she acquired additional responsibilities as the first director of the N.C. Office of Environmental Education.

While she taught at UNC’s public health school, Little advocated for her students to attend conferences, present papers and conduct field research.

“A student needs to be introduced to the real world, not just be confined to classrooms and laboratories,” she says. “Complex environmental problems may have simple answers – but they’re usually simple *wrong* answers. When students meet environmental professionals at conferences and in field settings, not only can they network about career opportunities, but they can test their own ideas against other scientists’, thereby improving the quality of their thought and their research.”

Finding the money to defray student expenses for travel was difficult, though. “Research grants and contracts provided little or no support,” she says, “and I suspect the situation is even worse now.”

That lack of funding inspired the establishment of The Linda West Little Research Endowment in Waste Management.



Dr. Little, today

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

Income paid from the fund will be used to support ESE graduate students learning about scientific waste management, particularly for student travel or field research support.

At the start of her career, Little was especially inspired by the teaching and research of ESE faculty member Dr. James C. Lamb III and by encouragement from Lamb and Dr. Charles Weiss. "Without their support, I wouldn't have been admitted to the program, nor would I have had the success I've had," she says.

Now other ESE students may pay similar tribute to Little, for her interest in their success.

—Linda Kastleman

GIVING

The future of North Carolina's public health school depends upon gifts made by you - today's alumni and friends - to benefit the public health heroes of tomorrow. For more information, contact the School's Office of External Affairs at 919.966.0198, or visit giving.unc.edu/gift/sph.

John Mayberry Anton &
Renee Helene Schwalberg
Nikita Arya
Carolann Dineen Augustine
Patricia Michel Backus
Thomas Jason Bacon
Edmund Gerald Barron
Sheri Ruth Bates
Douglas Alan Bell
Lynn W. Blanchard
Treavor Hall Boyer
Janet H. Bozzone
Christine M. Branche
Jay Thomas Briley
Sharon Campbell
Joseph A. Carsanaro
Douglas Roy Carver
Shine Chang
Michael Tsu-Lin Chen
Stacy-Ann Christian
Coastal Community Foundations
of S.C.
Jean Marie Colthurst
Peter Christian Connor
Francoise Marie Cornet
Julia De Clerque
*In honor of Caroline Lee B.
De Clerque*
*In memory of Gwendolyn Farmer
Lee Baugh Beard*
Ralph Alphonse DeMasi
Juli J. Desjardins
Anne M. Downs
Scott Davis Duncan
Michael James Dziamba
Dennis Lyn Ewald &
Cheryl Homzak Ewald
Laurel Ann Files
Bernard Vincent Franko III &
Edna Brewbaker Franko
Elizabeth Ann Franko
Elizabeth A. French
Robert Ernest Gandley
Evelyn Joyce Glass

G. Jay Graepel
Kathleen Marie Gray
Barbara Norton Hamilton
Pamela Gayle Hanna
Susan Lee Hartmaier
Health Strategies & Solutions Inc.
Sharon L. Heinrich
In honor of Dr. John Hatch
Elaine B. Hoffman
Christina A. Hoover
George & Virginia Howard
C. Christopher Idol &
Marion Wilson Idol
Nalin Johri
Baxter Lee Jones
Wanda Kaye Jones
Adena Cohen Kaplan
Sarah T. Kavanagh
Faison Green Knox
Jennifer Elston Lafata
Roberta Sevin Lane
Andrew James &
Catherine Edwards Lawler
Sheri Johnson Lawrence
David Ernest Layland
Kelvin K. Lee
Marcia Joanne Levenstein
Megan A. Lewis
Charles Elroy Llewellyn III &
Deborah Bowen Llewellyn
Megan Elsener Lott
Kathryn Marley Magruder
James Harry Mann Jr.
Monte William &
Marsha Ann Smith Masten
Craig Stephen Maughan
William Sheffield McCoy
John Knox McGill
Heather Frances McNamara
Melissa Lynn McPheeters
Jeffrey & Melinda Barefoot Michelson
William & Mary Jane Mietlowski
Beverly Nieman Mirman
Carlton Virginia Jackson Mitchell