Graeme Pierce Berlyn

September 6, 1933 - February 16, 2024

E. H. Harriman Professor of Forest Management and Physiology of Trees in the Yale University
School of the Environment.
Graeme found as a young man in his first academic job what he loved to do and he just continued doing it..on and on..at the Yale University School of Forestry/Environment,1960-2023
It led him into an overall lucky, useful, hard-working, long and happy life.
Graeme was born on the south side of Chicago Sept 6, 1933, to Clara Kraus Berlyn and Nathan
Berlyn. He was always proud to claim his grandfather Bernard (Barney) Berlyn as one of the
founders of, and an eminent member of the Socialist Party of Chicago. From this background,
Graeme developed a lifelong interest in diversity, equality and equal opportunity for everyone. He
graduated from South Shore High School, went out West for 2 years to fight fires and assist in
research on spruce budworm in Washington and Oregon, and returned to Chicago to attend
Wilson Junior College. He received his B.S.(1955) and Ph.D.(1960) from Iowa State University
and joined the Yale faculty in 1960.
Graeme was kind-hearted with special large spaces in his heart for his wife, children, grandchildren, students, colleagues, and friends. He loved teaching his courses in anatomy,
physiology, and ecophysiology of trees and forests and the related Research Methods course
because he loved the topics and the forest and he loved teaching the students in all their diversity. He was very interested in knowing or knowing about their families, the culture and

geography of their birthplaces, their ideas and aspirations, and he stood ready to help them with
any difficulties they encountered. As his colleague and good friend Prof. Mark Ashton said of
Graeme's relationship with students, "His students were devoted to him because he was devoted
to them." He also loved and felt it an honor to interact with the distinguished array of faculty and
staff who were his colleagues and friends at the School and at the University. Graeme greatly
enjoyed delving into research within a broad swath of plant science, in collaboration with students
or colleagues or solo. (for detailed account of his research range, see Dean Indy Burke's In
Memoriam: Graeme Berlyn (https://environment.yale.edu/news/article/in-memoriam-graeme-berlyn)
Graeme loved the School and its history and much of the University in general. He stood in
awe and gratitude for his friendship with early giants in the School who were also pioneers in
Forestry education in the U.S., e.g. Herman Haupt Chapman who connected directly back to
Gifford Pinchot (the founder of the Yale Forest School, the first in America) and was still active
when Graeme joined the faculty. Graeme gravitated to Prof Harold Lutz especially as mentor for
developing his academic philosophy, and he greatly enjoyed the lively discussions at lunch and
regular afternoon coffee breaks at Sage Hall with all the old-timers and the younger profs. and
others soon to join the faculty.
He was equally devoted to his family and to the friends that he encountered in all aspects of his
life. He enjoyed hiking and camping with friends and family, the family's cross-country camping
trips, and simpler pleasures too. He loved dogs, his family's dogs over the years and every dog
he met who showed a friendly response to the treats he always carried in his pocket. In his

90th year, he still enjoyed moderately long walks with the dog and any available family members, through the neighborhood or in parks, especially East Rock Park among the trees
along the Mill River. He was a longtime fan of Yale sports, the Yankees, and of women's basketball, especially the UConn women's team, and he had a pretty good shot himself in early
days. For many years, he took his very young son to almost all of Yale's football and basketball
home games as well as samplings of the wide variety of other sports events at Yale. Both of
them took Tae Kwon Do lessons from the legendary In Soo Hwang at the Yale gym. When his
daughter reached an age adequate for fandom, the whole family attended the basketball games. While he understood his daughter's passion for horses and horsemanship, he was not
tempted to join her in equestrian activities, but he very much appreciated her very early and
lasting commitment to liberal politics and ideas and her activism and advocacy. He enjoyed his
family life, was proud of the accomplishments of his children and grandchildren, and considered
his wife's independent scientific career in a different area of biology an enhancement of that
life. In Graeme's later years he winnowed his sports attention to basketball, baseball, and fitness & strength training of his own devising at the Yale gym, at home, and in the room in the
basement of Greeley Laboratory that the students called "Graeme's Heavy Metals Uptake Lab" (and many of them joined him there) .
He is survived by his spouse of 65 years, Mary K. Berry Berlyn, Ph.D.'66, his son John Berlyn
(Maria) of W. Pittston PA and daughter Dina B. Berlyn of Hamden CT, his granddaughter Eleanor Berlyn O'Neil (Scott) of Washington DC, and his grandson James J. Berlyn (Nora Turner) of New Haven; During his last illness as well as the immediately preceding one, he appreciated and was enlivened by being surrounded by this immediate family, visiting frequently as an entire or partial group or individually. He and his family greatly appreciated the
visits, phone calls, messages, cards, letters, flowers, and plants, all carrying good wishes from
students, other friends, and the Environment School community. He is also survived by his

brother’s family (a nephew and 3 nieces in Southern California) and several cousins spanning 4
generations. He was predeceased by his brother Barney E. Berlyn of Long Beach, CA.
There will be a memorial “Celebration of a Life” for Graeme at the Yale School of the Environment in early October, exact time and date to be announced.
Prof. Bill Burch, a long-time and wonderful friend and contemporary, closed his reflections on
Graeme and their friendship with: “As we go out to finish the stories that we began with Graeme
there is more than we ever thought possible. For us it is a life sustained and passing from and
filled with the songs of trees.”
One of Graeme’s longtime favorite bits of poetry was:
“The Moving Finger writes and having writ,
Moves on…
And all your Piety nor Wit shall lure it back to cancel half a line
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it. “
from Omar Khayyam’s Rubaiyat (as translated by Edward Fitzgerald).

Graeme's life has been written. We remember. We move on.