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The Father of the Gordon Natural Area passes away

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The Father of the Gordon Natural Area passes away

On Friday, November 30, 2007, Dr. William R. Overlease passed away at Midland House in Indianapolis, Indiana. From 1963 to 1986, Dr. Overlease was a professor of ecology and field biology at West Chester University, and was honored as a professor emeritus later in his career.

Dr. Overlease was born on October 2, 1925 in Elkhart, Indiana. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1946 and fought in the Pacific Theater. Afterwards, he attended Michigan State University and earned a bachelor of science degree in forestry in 1950, a master of science in conservation in 1952 and a doctorate in botany and plant pathology in 1964.

Dr. Overlease met his wife, Edith, of 52 years while working as a naturalist in the Indiana state parks over several years. He taught ecology and field biology from 1963 to 1986 at WCU. Here he was perhaps most recognized for his success in formally establishing the Gordon Natural Area as such in December 1973 after much deliberation with the Board of Trustees. He had been working to preserve the area since 1963. Dr Overlease installed a set of plant monitoring plots at the corner of New St and Tigue Rd in 1969 and every year for 35 years monitored the coming and going of all plant species. Dr Hertel will work with Edith to get those data published.

Dr. Overlease was passionate about wildlife and authored many publications, the most recent being "100 Years of Change in the Distribution of Common Indiana Weeds" (2007) which he coauthored with Edith.