

Register, Ulma Doyle (1920–1997)

RICHARD A. SCHAEFER

Richard A. Schaefer, B.A. (La Sierra College). Director of Community Relations, Loma Linda University Medical Center, 1976-2000. Historian, Loma Linda University Health, 2000 to the present. President, Loma Linda Chamber of Commerce, 2008-2010. Commissioner, City of Loma Linda Historical Commission, 2008-2020. Schaefer's numerous books include *LEGACY* (heritage of Loma University Medical Center), *Service is Our Calling* (50th anniversary of Loma University School of Dentistry), *A Century of Caring* (history of Loma Linda University School of Nursing), *Glory of the Vision* (history of Loma Linda University School of Medicine), and *Protons: A Beam of Hope*, *CREATION: "Behold It Was Very Good!"* Schaefer is a prolific author, public relations professional, and public speaker who has presented and represented Loma Linda University history for over 50 years.

An expert in Vitamin B-12 studies, U. D. Register did much to demonstrate the nutritional adequacy of a vegetarian diet and advance public recognition of its benefits.

The Making of a Biochemist

Ulma Doyle Register was born the second of five children on February 4, 1920, in West Monroe, Louisiana. It may have been a combination of two influences that led him to become a biochemist: the chemistry set he received as a child and an inherited curiosity and desire to experiment and learn. Chemistry became his favorite subject in high school. Following two years' of chemical engineering study at Louisiana State University, he received his Bachelor of Science degree from Madison College, Madison, Tennessee, in 1942. Three days after graduation, he married Helen Hite, a young woman from Texas.

In 1944, Register received his master's degree from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, while working as a research chemist for Madison Foods, to improve the nutritional value and palatability of health foods. After two years in the United States military, Register began a three-year fellowship in 1950 at the University of Wisconsin, where he earned a Ph.D. in biochemistry. His emphasis was on the then little-known Vitamin B-12. He then spent one year at Tulane University in New Orleans, for a post-doctoral fellowship in human nutrition.¹



U. D. Register

Photo courtesy of Department of Archives and Special Collections,
Loma Linda University.

Loma Linda Professor

In 1951, Dr. Register joined the Loma Linda College of Medical Evangelists Department of Biochemistry. In addition to his regular teaching duties, Dr. Register spent much of his time in research and in helping to organize graduate studies. He received several research grants for his department.

As a freshman class sponsor for the School of Medicine Class of 1958, he was known as a kindly person, always willing to stop and answer a question or help explain a difficult subject. Students, who visited the Register home during their daily evening worship, enjoyed singing hymns, reading Scriptures, and praying together.²

In February 1967, the new Loma Linda University School of Public Health () evolved from the Division of Public Health in the Loma Linda University School of Medicine. The School of Nutrition and Dietetics became the Department of Nutrition in the new School of Public Health. Dr. Register became the first Chair of the new department, effective July 1, 1968.³

“Mr. Nutrition”

In his new position, Register was a research-oriented pioneer in Vitamin B-12 studies, where he developed a strong academic and research program. He and other faculty members demonstrated the nutritional adequacy of vegetarian diets, and showed that plant proteins could provide essential amino acids. Register participated in the first White House Conference on Food, Nutrition and Health in 1969. Then, he was invited by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences to write their statement on vegetarian diets.⁴

Known affectionately as “Mr. Nutrition,” Register combined his understanding of nutrition and biochemistry with his recognized ability to explain the complexities of nutritional science and to make theory practical to people of widely differing backgrounds. This skill was evident in the “It’s Your World of Good Food” presentations he made with his wife, Helen, on Art Linkletter’s Its Your World national television show, and on the Search telecast.⁵ Register served as Chair of the Department of Nutrition until 1984, when he retired. Shortly thereafter, he was named professor emeritus.

Under Dr. Register’s administration, many innovations in public health nutrition took place. Beginning in 1972, the Doctor of Health Science (DHSc) degree program prominently featured nutrition. Many DHSc graduates also fulfilled the Registered Dietitian (RD) qualifications. A unique combined degree program in public health nutrition and the research degree of the MS in nutrition was first offered in 1978. A very practical and much used health education/nutrition double major began in 1983. One year later, the nutrition department recognized the special needs of physicians and dentists and began a new major designed especially for them.

Register was one of three authors of, "The Vegetarian Diet: Food For Us All," produced by the American Dietetic Association.⁶ One of the authors, Kathleen Zolber, Ph.D., credited the document as the beginning of the American Dietetic Associations' acceptance of vegetarian diets as reasonably healthful.⁷

Contribution

During the Third International Congress on Vegetarian Nutrition held at Loma Linda University from March 24 to March 26, 1997, Dr. Register was recognized by his colleagues for his knowledge and expertise in nutrition. On June 15, 1997, he received the Distinguished University Service Award from Loma Linda University, its highest honor. A special nutrition research fund, entitled the U.D. Register Nutrition Research Fund, has been established by the School of Public Health.⁸

After an accidental fall, Dr. Register died in Loma Linda on July 17, 1997, survived by his wife, Helen, and their three daughters; Rebecca, Dorothy and Deborah.⁹

SOURCES

"Memorial Services Held for Long-Time Professor." *Today*, July 23, 1997.

Johnston, Patricia K. "Dedication: UD Register, 1920-1977." *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 70, no. 3 (September 1999): 433s.

Sonnenberg, L., K. Zolber, and U.D. Register. *The Vegetarian Diet: Food For Us All*. Chicago: American Dietetic Association, rev. 1981.

"Ulma Doyle Register obituary." *ARH*, October 23, 1997.

NOTES

1. Patricia K. Johnston, "Dedication: UD Register, 1920-1977," *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 70, no. 3 (September 1999): 433s.

2. "Memorial Services Held for Long-Time Professor," *Today*, July 23, 1997.

3. Loma Linda University Board of Trustees, Minutes #27 and #39, 67, and #218, 67.

4. Johnston, "Dedication."

5. Ibid.

6. L. Sonnenberg, K. Zolber, and U.D. Register, *The Vegetarian Diet: Food For Us All* (Chicago: American Dietetic Association, rev. 1981).

7. Georgia Hodgkin, Ph.D., email to Richard A. Schaefer, November 9, 2018.

8. "Memorial Services Held for Long-Time Professor."

9. "Ulma Doyle Register obituary," *ARH*, October 23, 1997, 28.

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