

In Memoriam

Garth N. Jones, Ph.D.



An acclaimed public administrator, both as an academic and a practitioner passed away not too long ago. His death went by almost unnoticed by many in the field. Here is what I know about a good friend, a prolific writer in organizational change, comparative and development administration, and a major philanthropist. His work is of great import to SICA members. Garth N. Jones died on July 1, 2020 at the ripe old age of 95 years. Like Fred Riggs, he was not trained in Public Administration, but for a “Special Certificate in Public Administration” he obtained in 1948 from the University of Utah. His PhD was in Political Science and Economics.

Having taught at several places such as Brigham Young, Utah, Colorado State University and Southern California, he retired as Dean of Business and Public Administration, University of Alaska at Anchorage. Later he moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, with connections to Utah State University, where he died.

He was a prolific writer with over 180 articles published in many parts of the world. He served initially as a Fulbrighter in Taiwan, and a Senior

Specialist at the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii. His contributions and writing were largely informed by his fieldwork as a Consultant and Public Administration Advisor to US/AID as Chief of Public Administration Division, Pakistan, and a consultant in Jakarta, Indonesia. That later stint, even led him to the translation of seven books from Bahasa Indonesia into English.

Garth’s deep involvement with “development” is striking, in that he started with a small grant from CAG (Comparative Administration Group) that launched Garth into the study of planned organization change. As is well known, CAG initially confined itself with only comparative studies until Ford Foundation made their grant contingent upon the inclusion of the term “development” which may not have been welcomed, but accepted by a pragmatic Fred Riggs who headed the CAG. This grant launched Garth into planning for development and development planning.

Like any reputable public administration scholar, he too studied bureaucracy, mostly within the LDCs (Less Developed Countries). However, he reached different conclusions far different from the rest. While showing the shortcomings of bureaucrats, he felt that it was they, the civil servants who saved Pakistan that had gone through several regime changes, moving between somewhat democratic to Martial Law rule under several Generals. It was in this context that he thought of bureaucrats as “change agents.” We used to talk a lot regarding the state of affairs in the sub-continent, me coming from India, and he as an expert on Pakistan. We both agreed that partition of India in 1947 was a major mistake, and the price for it is being paid even to this day with continued rivalry between India and Pakistan. The quarrels regarding Kashmir led to at least three wars between the two nations.

Among all of Garth's writings, the only article I found he published in PAR was in 1976, titled: "Frontiersmen in Search for the 'Lost Horizon': The State of Public Administration in the 1960s". It was highly critical of the state of the profession. He took particular issue with what is sold and written about in the name of "development administration" as Garth thought it was all far from what happens in the field, and of little value to those working in the vineyards of development. In particular, he excoriated the publications out of Duke University under the aegis of CAG. He thought that most of those articles published in the several volumes sounded as if they were written in haste or worse, those which were sitting on the desks of individual authors who could not publish in refereed journals. Given that, I called him in one of my own writings, a "contrarian". I was a little bit wary as to how he would take that. But the sooner he saw that, he called me to say that I captured him correctly, and thanked me. Needless to say, I was relieved. We became very good friends, and communicated regularly. I read many a draft of his articles; he thought of me as a sounding board.

I was indeed surprised at first with his commitment to the welfare of the minority sect of Ahmadiyyas in Pakistan, the majority Moslem nation. In 1954, they were declared by General Zia-ul-Haq as apostate. That this sect, although spread over several countries were persecuted ever since 1889, Garth felt deeply at their lot in Pakistan. Once I knew that Garth was a Mormon, I could find the connection. Mormons, a home-grown minority religion in the United States, who always have been fighting persecution and were relentless in their struggle for acceptance, must have led Garth to find affinity with the Ahmadiyyas.

With all these accomplishments, Garth did not find himself among the mainstream public administration academe. I wondered. Perhaps the

answer is in the experience of Dwight Waldo who admitted that he was made to feel like a pariah for proclaiming that all public administration is political theory. He, however, got rehabilitated and eventually found his place in ASPA. That Garth was a "contrarian," and more inclined to develop his own scholarship out of his fieldwork may have led to this somewhat isolated status as a scholar in this field. However, he made a point of promoting the field of public administration with munificent grants to both Brigham Young and the University of Utah to support their students annually.

We used to talk a lot on the phone (he never was connected to the internet, whether by design or by circumstances). His phone conversations perhaps were the closest to a tête-à-tête dialogue. I enjoyed, like he did, burning the lines, so to speak. Those conversations were an education by themselves. Now that he is gone, I miss him.

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