

Gordon Justice White, 88. The longtime

Kalamazoo, MI resident and former research scientist at The Upjohn Company died peacefully on Friday, December 20, 2019, at home surrounded by loved ones.

He was born on May 3, 1931, in Elgin, IL, the son of Kendall and Ruth (Matteson) White. A 1949 graduate of Elgin High School, he began studies at University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. In 1950, while he was a college student, Gordon met the love of his life, the former Barbara Lee Story of Evansville, IN. The couple dated for a couple of years before becoming engaged. Gordon and Barbara were married on January 31, 1953, at First Baptist Church in Evansville.



In the spring of 1953, Gordon graduated from University of Illinois with a degree in bacteriology. From 1953-57, Gordon served with the US Navy, achieving the rank of Lieutenant JG. He served aboard the USS Steuben County and completed several lengthy tours of duty in the South Pacific, visiting places that included Pearl Harbor, Okinawa and Nagasaki.

After his military service, Gordon returned to his studies, earning a master's degree in biology from Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, in 1958, and a Ph.D. in biology from Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, in 1962. From 1959-62, Gordon was the recipient of the National Institutes of Health Fellowship.

Gordon and Barbara lived in Urbana-Champaign, IL, Zion, IL, Newport, RI, San Diego, CA, Oakland, CA, Skokie, IL, and Waltham, MA, before settling in Kalamazoo in 1962. Gordon joined the former Upjohn Company in late 1962 and worked there until retiring in 1989. A biochemist at Upjohn, Gordon helped to develop many drugs, including an important medication that helps those recovering from organ transplants. Gordon's research had been published by the American Chemical Society, Elsevier and many medical journals.

He was a member of Portage United Church of Christ, Alpha Chi Rho and Society of American Biologists. Gordon will always be remembered for his sharp intellect, his dry humor and his strong work ethic. He was an avid golfer who also enjoyed photography, fishing, camping, coin collecting, music and science fiction films. More than anything, Gordon was a devoted husband, father and grandfather who cherished time with his family. Gordon and Barbara were happiest when they were hosting large family gatherings in their home. Gordon was genuinely curious about the world and had a passion for travel. He and Barbara had taken 22 cruises that included trips to the Caribbean, Alaska and several places in Europe. For about 20 years, he and Barbara spent part of each winter in Gulf Shores, AL, and other locations on the Gulf of Mexico. In the 1990s and 2000s, Gordon and Barbara made regular trips to New York City where Gordon especially enjoyed theater and museums.