



IN MEMORIAM

Robert Mower Hagan
Professor of Water Science, Emeritus
UC Davis
1917–2002

Robert Hagan, who retired as a professor of water science in the Department of Land, Air and Water Resources died on July 3, 2002 from complications of strokes. He was preceded in death by his wife of 57 years, Rachel Knapp Hagan. His sons, James R. Hagan of Cupertino, California and Larry Hagan of Reston, Virginia, four grandchildren, a great-grandchild and his companion Gennie Riddle survive him. Bob Hagan was born in Oakland, one of two children. His father was an attorney and his mother an educator.

Professor Hagan received his B.S. in chemistry in 1937 and an M.S. in soil physics in 1941 from UC Berkeley and his Ph.D. in soil science and plant physiology from UC Davis in 1948. He served the University and the State of California for more than 50 years, beginning in 1937 as a teacher in the Botany Department. He began his career in soil science in 1939 at UC Berkeley studying the distribution of carbon tetrachloride in soils, which at that time was used as an herbicide. Bob was a reserve U.S. Army officer. During the Second World War he accepted an active duty assignment as a commissioned officer for six years and taught military science to ROTC students at UC Berkeley. He returned to Davis in 1946. Since that time he was professor of water science in the Department of Land, Air and Water Resources, Irrigation and Water Science and Engineering at the University of California, Davis (UC Davis), from which he retired in 1990.

Dr. Hagan's research was directed to crops and turf grass and their response to water supply, water-use efficiency and water conservation. He was greatly concerned about the need and challenges to communicate science to policymakers and planners at all levels of government, as well as to other agencies and special interest groups. He played a pivotal role in communicating agriculture's changing role in society, on issues relating to the relationships between agriculture, society and environmental resources. Because of his commitment and effectiveness to bridge science with public policy regarding water resources, Dr. Hagan was the first person in the entire statewide university system to hold a triple academic appointment – professor in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Science, irrigationist in the California Agricultural Experiment Station, and statewide extension specialist in the California Agricultural Extension Service. Throughout his career, he always remained scientifically objective and politically neutral.

Bob was one of the founding members of the Sacramento-based, nonpartisan Water Education Foundation, established in 1977 to create a better understanding of water issues and help resolve water resource problems through educational programs. He was outspoken about supporting the impartial and unbiased reporting of water controversies, which is the role of the University professor. He was truly dedicated to “informing the debate” on water issues in the state. He served on the Board of Directors of the Water Education Foundation for 24 years and as president from 1989 to 1994.

His expertise was appreciated internationally as well. Bob was the senior co-editor of Agronomy Monograph No. 11, titled “Irrigation of Agricultural Lands.” a widely quoted 1,180-page treatise, and he was co-editor of the International Handbook on Irrigation, Drainage and Salinity, published by FAO. He visited the former Soviet Union, India, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, where he consulted with scientists and policy makers about water research and management. He served on science advisory committees to the US president, California governor, the World Bank, Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation and many other institutions. In 1964 he was named coordinator and adviser on foreign activities for the UC Davis College of Agriculture.

Professor Hagan was a well-liked and respected teacher. His teaching included a graduate course on Irrigation and Planning and Management, and an introductory course on Water and Society, for which he received the Magnar Ronning Award for teaching excellence in 1980. He emphasized problem solving and applications of science to real-world problems. Many of his students have gone on to important positions within the consulting industry, state and federal government.

Bob Hagan was committed to the campus and Davis community. Among his many University service activities, he served as the department chair of the former Department of Irrigation from 1954 to 1963. He served as the university representative on the Yolo County Water Resources Board and as one of the directors of the Yolo County Flood Control & Water Conservation District. Bob was very active in the Association of California Water Agencies, who honored him in 1988 as Water Leader of the Year. For his many contributions to the campus and the State, he received the 1998 Award of Distinction from the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at UC Davis.

Bob was a major contributor and founder of International House that serves as a meeting place for students from around the world. He was involved in many off-campus activities including Rotary Club, The Boy Scouts of America, Little League and his church. Most recently he was involved in the development of the University Retirement Community in West Davis. His community activity was recognized by the City of Davis and his fellow citizens when he and his wife were co-awarded the Covell Award and were recognized as “Citizens of the Year.” He will be remembered as a congenial, happy and outgoing individual. After his retirement in 1987 he contributed \$175,000 towards the creation of the Hagan endowed chair in water management and policy at UC Davis.

Bob Hagan’s commitment to water education, his broad smile and firm handshake will be missed by his faculty colleagues and all who knew him.

Michael Singer
Jan Hopmans
Ken Tanji