

# Distinguished Achievement Citation

Robert J. Havighurst

Class of 1921

Ohio Wesleyan salutes Robert Havighurst, scientist turned humanist, who has influenced profoundly the world's understanding of the needs, aspirations, habits and conditions of older people.

Graduating from Ohio Wesleyan with a major in chemistry and going on to obtain a PhD in chemistry from The Ohio State University, Dr. Havighurst's involvements during his early adult years were in chemistry and physics. Once fascinated by the potential of splitting the atom, had he continued on his early path, we could be honoring him today as one of the fathers of the atom bomb!

After a gradual change of direction, he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago as professor of education in 1941. There, beginning a landmark study of senior citizens in the early 1950s, he initiated scientifically prepared documentation on the realities of the aging process and society's treatment of its mature citizenry. Applying techniques of research of a scientific mind, he studies aging in various occupational groups. Through painstaking efforts, he created fully dimensional portraits of senior citizens, which underscored the actuality that old age is a period with substantial rewards and satisfactions and refuted the popular perception that grand parenting was the only appropriate role to be filled by those over 60.

Author or co-author of the first authoritative books in the sociology and psychology of aging, he has to his credit of least 47 books, several hundred monographs and articles in learned journals. His energetic efforts on behalf of the elderly are basis for legend and too numerous to list; *inter alia*, he was one of the founders of the Gerontological Society and later its president; an editor of the Journal of Gerontology; president of the Division of Adult Development and aging of the American Psychological Association, member of the board of directors of the National Council on Aging, consultant to the American association of Retired Persons and top adviser to two White House Conferences on aging. Perhaps his greatest contribution has been his part in establishing graduate and undergraduate programs in gerontology in several universities.

Possessing the IQ of a genius and vigorous interest in many societal concerns, at the same time he was studying maturity, Dr. Havighurst was lecturing on child and adolescent development and was widely quoted on delinquency and on the development of American Indian children. He is known internationally as an authority in education, sociology and anthropology. A scholar in history and literature, he speaks six languages fluently.

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