

Doral Glen Conner Memorial

STUART A. FOSTER

Kentucky State Climatologist, Kentucky Climate Center



Doral Glen Conner, founder of the Kentucky Climate Center and State Climatologist Emeritus, died peacefully in his home on January 6, 2020, at the age of 89. He was born, raised, and died in rural Allen County, Kentucky, a place that he treasured, but his life was an adventure that took him around the world. The son of Payton Ham Conner and Nellie Helen Weaver Conner, Glen was born on March 30, 1930.

Glen graduated from Allen County High School in 1948 before attending Western Kentucky University (WKU), where he graduated in 1952 with a bachelor's degree in geography. Having enrolled in Reserve Officer Training Corps as an undergraduate, he joined the United States Air Force (USAF) in 1952 at the rank of second lieutenant. He served in the Vietnam War and helped to conduct USAF operations while stationed in Thailand. Glen was promoted to the rank of Colonel while stationed in Korea and served on the Tactical Operations staff at the Pentagon before retiring in 1974.

He then returned home to rural Allen County

and commuted to WKU in Bowling Green to complete his master's degree in geography. In 1976, he joined the faculty. He was appointed state climatologist in 1978 and founded the Kentucky Climate Center in 1979. In his role as state climatologist and director of the Kentucky Climate Center, he was an innovator in the application of computer and information technology, developing an early computer mapping program and one of the first public websites at WKU. Glen served on the state drought taskforce during its formative years and developed a series of climatological reports for communities throughout Kentucky. Working with the National Climatic Data Center and the Midwestern Regional Climate Center, he directed efforts through the Kentucky Climate Center to help digitize historical climate records from their original written forms. Through this and other projects, he mentored numerous students and young professionals in applied climatology and was acknowledged for his encouragement of women to pursue careers in science. As a faculty member in the Department of Geography

and Geology, he taught a wide array of courses, including courses in meteorology and computer mapping. His courses were always popular among students.

Following retirement from WKU, Glen remained professionally active. He traveled across the United States to conduct archival and onsite research and authored a series of station history reports, each providing a wealth of historical information and serving as critical metadata to aid the interpretation of historical climate data. On a national level, he never missed the Annual Meeting of the American Association of State Climatologists, where he was regularly sought out by younger colleagues. He was a frequent speaker at professional meetings, even in his last years.

Glen also remained active within his local community. He was a member of the Liberty Baptist Church and regularly attended the Holland Baptist Church. He was active in the Scottsville Rotary Club and volunteered for the Allen County Historical Society. He gained renown locally as an author, publishing four books, including his final work, *Our Sense of Place: A History of Allen County, Kentucky Communities*.

Glen lived each day with vigor, sought knowledge, shared wisdom, and stood as a beacon of encouragement to others until his last day. During a speech to the AASC, he once said that his goal in later life was “to thwart something.” He did: the spread of ignorance and pessimism.

I had the honor and pleasure of knowing Glen as a mentor and friend. He set an example of what a state climatologist should be and helped me get my feet wet with the job. Even in his later years, he would stop in the office to visit, sharing pictures of snow rollers, frost flowers, or some other fascination of the natural world. And he never parted without sharing a joke, a word of the day, or a jewel of wisdom.

Glen was preceded in death by his wife June Parrish Conner, son John Conner, and brother Neal Conner. He is survived by his daughters,

Teresa Hoefler of Richmond Hill, Georgia and Janet Conner of Eureka, Montana, two grandchildren, Jamie Hoff and Glen Hoefler, and two great grandchildren, Rosalie and Lukas Hoff.

Memorial donations in honor of Glen may be made to the Allen County Historical Society.