

## IN MEMORIAM

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) was saddened to learn of the deaths of the following individuals. We extend our sympathies to the families, friends, and colleagues of these individuals. Each had a profound impact on our profession and the people around them. All will be greatly missed.

### Ronald Cohen

Ronald “Doc” Cohen passed away in June 2022. He was born in August 1926 in New York City. He was a licensed pharmacist, public health officer, electrician, exterminator, high school teacher, university instructor, veteran of World War II, navy reservist, postal worker, and inventor. He was a fellow of the World Health Organization and the Royal Society for Public Health. He edited such diverse professional and scholarly publications as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Journal of Environmental Health*, and *New York State Sanitarian*. He was also the occupational health editor for *JAMA* and was consulted frequently for his expertise in public health. In 1996, Cohen was the recipient of the prestigious Richard J. Sullivan Award that honors a New Jersey resident who “demonstrates exceptional leadership and outstanding accomplishment in safeguarding public health, protecting and enhancing New Jersey’s diverse natural resources, and creating vibrant, sustainable communities that provide economic opportunity for all.”

Cohen held a doctorate in philosophy from New York University in public health administration, two master’s degrees in public health and pharmacy, and a bachelor’s degree in pharmacy. He worked in public health departments in New York City, New York; North Bergen County, New Jersey; and the Middlebrook Regional Health Commission in Bound Brook, New Jersey.

Cohen’s contributions to public health were numerous. He succeeded in eliminating carbon monoxide poisoning in New York City tenements in the 1950s by inventing an automatic shut-off device for heaters and boilers. He detected and helped address Kaposi’s sarcoma in the early stages of the AIDS epidemic. He worked tirelessly to reduce cancer incidence in central New Jersey. Cohen also developed computerized environmental hazard response strategies for local public health authorities and determined that the fouling of beaches in New Jersey resulted from medical waste disposal. He testified before Congress on environmental health issues at the invitation of Senator Millicent Fenwick (R-NJ) and also served as part of a World Health Organization asbestos task force in Israel, South Africa, the Soviet Union, and the UK.

According to his family, he was friendly to all and sought to address racism and prejudice throughout his long life. The town of Middlesex, New Jersey, established a “Doc Cohen” day to recognize his many contributions to the community and its people.

Source: Obituary provided by Mark Cohen.

### Larry J. Gordon

Larry J. Gordon passed away in April 2022. Gordon, a giant of the environmental health field, was born in Oklahoma and grew up in New Mexico. After graduating high school and attending several semesters of college, he joined the U.S. Navy in 1944. He was stationed at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and worked as a pharmacist assistant. After being honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy, he went to the University of New Mexico and earned bachelor and master degrees in biology and chemistry. In 1950, Gordon saw an advertisement for a “sanitarian” position that required a degree plus a car. He had both and took the job with the county health department in Silver City, New Mexico.

Gordon earned his master of public health from the University of Michigan School of Public Health in 1954. After earning his degree, he went to work for the city of Albuquerque as chief sanitarian and later as director of the Division of Environmental Health. He held this position for several years and was then asked to become director of environmental health for the State Department of Health and Social Services. He held numerous positions within New Mexico, including health commissioner of New Mexico in 1975 and state secretary of Health and Environment in 1987. On June 30, 1988, Gordon retired from public service.

After retirement, Gordon served as a visiting professor of public administration with the University of New Mexico and received an honorary doctorate in 2007 for his long-term commitment and leadership in the area of environmental and public health from the University of New Mexico. He also served as a consultant to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and was a frequent guest lecturer.

Gordon engaged in various national professional associations. He felt that knowing about what they were doing and why they were doing it was of immense value to him as he tried to make decisions about environmental health issues. He was one of the 12 founders of the American Academy of Sanitarians and became one of the first diplomates to achieve laureate status that is bestowed for continued outstanding commitment, leadership, and accomplishments in the environmental health profession. He was a member of the American Public Health Association (served as president from 1980–1981), Conference of Governmental Environmental Health Engineers, and NEHA. He was one of the founders of the Council on Education for Public Health and was a longtime member of the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council. He also served as chair of the National Committee on the Future of Environmental Health and was a senior fellow at the University of New Mexico Institute for Public Policy.

Gordon was the recipient of several prestigious public health and environmental health awards. In 1961 he was recipient of the Walter S. Mangold Award, the highest honor given by NEHA.

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He was the recipient of the Sedgwick Medal in 1987, the highest award given by the American Public Health Association. He was also awarded the Walter F. Snyder Award in 1978 from NEHA and NSF, the Samuel J. Crumline Consumer Protection Award, and many other state and national awards.

Gordon was a dedicated public health and environmental health professional who made an incredible impact on the profession. He developed, testified, and gained enactment of numerous state and local environmental health measures. He testified before congressional committees regarding several major environmental health issues, including the Clean Water Act, national energy policy, matters of national health policy, and the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. He published over 240 articles in all areas of environmental health, environmental protection, and public health. In 2020, Gordon published his memoir, *Environmental Health and Protection Adventures: A Memoir*, that chronicles his career as a nationally recognized figure in matters of public health and environmental health and protection.

Source: Excerpts from the profile of Larry J. Gordon written by Dr. Herman Koren for the NEHA History Project Task Force and reviewed by Bruce Etchison and Gary Gordon; Larry J. Gordon obituary, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/santafenewmexican/name/larry-gordon-obituary?id=34650335>

## Mila Mangold

Mila Mangold passed away in July 2022 at the age of 114. She held the title of California's oldest person, was the second oldest person in the U.S., and was the seventh oldest person in the world. She was the wife of Walter S. Mangold (1896–1978), who played a key role in the development of the environmental health profession. Walter Mangold dedicated his life to the practice of environmental health in an exemplary manner and was a beacon of excellence and inspiration for environmental health professionals. In 1955, NEHA created the Walter S. Mangold Award, the highest honor that can be bestowed on a member for outstanding contributions to the profession.

Mila Mangold was born in Nebraska on November 14, 1907. She was the second youngest of four siblings in a family whose parents had recently immigrated from Prague. Her family moved to Los Angeles, California, in the 1920s and soon after settled in Berkeley. It was there she met her future husband, Walter Mangold. The two met while she worked as a secretary in a health department. Mila Mangold worked as his secretary for many years until transitioning into a homemaker with the birth of her only child, Donald, in 1945.

Over her 114 years, Mila Mangold lived through two world wars, two pandemics that were over one century apart (the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic and the COVID-19 pandemic), and numerous technological advancements. According to Donald Mangold, the

greatest elixir of youth appeared to be her effervescent mind and unyielding sense of curiosity. “She was always inquisitive,” Donald Mangold said. “It’s a lesson that others can take as they strive to match her impressive longevity.”

Source: *The Mercury News*, <https://www.mercurynews.com/2022/07/13/she-saw-so-much-californias-oldest-person-longtime-berkeley-resident-dies-at-114/>; *Los Angeles Times*, <https://www.latimes.com/obituaries/story/2022-07-15/mila-mangold-oldest-person-in-california-dies-at-114>.

## Brian Nummer

Dr. Brian Nummer passed away in September 2022. He was a highly respected subject matter expert in food microbiology relevant to almost all food commodities, with a focus on retail and food service food safety and small business food safety. His specialties included food microbiology, retail food safety, manufacturing food safety, reduced oxygen packaging at retail, hazard analysis critical control point (HACCP), sanitation, food preservation, and food entrepreneurship. Dr. Nummer was an extension food safety specialist and professor in the Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food Sciences at Utah State University. He received his doctorate of philosophy from Clemson University and worked at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, University of Georgia, and Tennessee Tech University, along with the creation of a private food safety consulting business.

Dr. Nummer was active in several organizations including the Conference for Food Protection, International Association for Food Protection, Institute for Food Technologists, Association of Food and Drug Officials, and NEHA. He authored over 100 publications, including peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, abstracts, fact sheets, and newsletter articles. His last article published in the *Journal of Environmental Health* was in the September 2022 issue, “Survival of *Listeria monocytogenes* in Commercially Available Refrigerated Cold-Brewed Coffee.”

News of his passing was shared on LinkedIn and as one comment stated, “With the passing of Dr. Brian Nummer, the global food safety community has lost a leader, teacher, mentor, and friend. He made a tremendous impact on so many people and organizations.”

Source: The Food Safety Guru, <http://food-safety.guru>; LinkedIn, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nummer/>. 🌸

*Editor’s Note:* If you would like to share information about the passing of an environmental health professional to be mentioned in a future In Memoriam, please contact Kristen Ruby-Cisneros at [kruby@neha.org](mailto:kruby@neha.org). The *Journal* will publish the In Memoriam section twice a year in the June and December issues, or in other issues as determined appropriate.