

Obituary



Dr. Mohan N. Shrestha

(March 22, 1939 – September 14, 2007)

Retired Professor of Geography,
Bowling Green State University, Ohio, U.S.A.

The news that Dr. Mohan N. Shrestha, 68, a retired geography professor at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) and a native of Nepal who was a pioneer when he pursued studies in the United States, died Friday in St. Luke's Hospital, Maumee, from an infection that affected his heart valves; he developed a lung infection this spring and later a blood infection" was flashed in the local newspaper, *Sentinel Tribune*, on September 19, 2007. Friends and relatives in Nepal were stunned to hear the sad news of the unexpected demise of an adorable gentleman admired by all who came into contact with him for his multifarious activities as a brilliant scholar, sympathetic teacher, favourite friend, devoted son, benevolent brother and sportive player.

He was a Professor Emeritus of Geography at BGSU. He had retired on June 1, 2004 after 35 years of praiseworthy service. Professor Art Samel, the Chairman of the Department of Geography, BGSU, said, "He was highly regarded in the department. He was a kind and gentle man, and his students responded well to him." Dr. Joseph Spinelli, another retired Professor whose career paralleled Dr. Shrestha's in the Geography Department recalls his friend as "a very fair Professor, he was very kind to the students. He was a real gentle person and students liked him for that." Dr. Stephen Chang Associate Professor of the Department agreed. "He had a gentle demeanor and easy smile," he said. "He was a fine faculty colleague. He introduced computer cartography into our curriculum when that specialization was in its infancy."

Dr. Shrestha was a very brilliant scholar and even at the school stage he had impressed his teachers as a very promising student who excelled not only in studies but other extra-curricular activities as well. He was very well known for his literary works and also was awarded prizes and honours for his poems and essays, among which a poem entitled "*wen*" (which means "lunatic") that he had recited some time in 1950s was so highly appreciated by the Evaluation Committee and other literary critics of the time that he was honoured at his very early age with a triumphal medal. He had also been able to bag quite a good number of gold medals for his proficiency in various other subjects as well. He graduated from the High School at the age of 13 and received his Bachelor's Degree when he was 17 years old. Then he joined the Tri Chandra College as a Demonstrator in the Department of Geography and guided the Intermediate and B.A. Students in Geography Practical classes. He was a very good Demonstrator and he was so very friendly to the students that the students called him "Brother Mohan". When the Tribhuvan University started teaching Geography in M.A. Classes in 1961, he joined the first batch of M.A. students and in 1963 topped the list of the successful candidates of that year. With his very

attractive scholarly career it was not difficult for him to get the Fulbright Scholarship for his further studies and in 1964 he went to U.S.A., first to Texas and then he got himself transferred to the University of Iowa where he earned his Ph.D. in Geography in 1969. He was already teaching the BGSU where he was engaged for two years from 1967 to 1969. Then he returned to his own motherland, Nepal and started teaching in the Tribhuvan University. But he received an urgent letter from BGSU inviting him to join the Faculty in the Department of Geography since they needed a qualified Quantitative Geographer and having been very much impressed by his previous work there, they had decided to take him for the post and he was offered the first chance. So he returned to BGSU in 1971 and stayed there as a Professor until 2004 after which also he was requested by the University to continue teaching and guiding the students in various researches as Professor Emeritus.

Economic Geography was a specialty of Dr. Shrestha and he was equally at home whether he would be undertaking research among the farmers of Iowa or conducting an intensive study on migration of people in Nepal. He had a strong background in Statistical Analysis, and he was really and deeply interested in “connecting how people moved and made economic choices and how it was related to geography”. He was very much interested in Science and Logic and he called Mathematics “the truest International Language”. He felt that mathematics an understandable subject bringing all different communities together since the rules are the same. “No matter what country you are in, you can’t quibble about it,” he used to say. “A Stochastic Model of Consumer Spatial Behaviour” is one of his best articles published in *The Himalayan Review*, Vol. II-III, 1969-1970, the Journal of Nepal Geographical Society. In the same issue of *The Himalayan Review* he had also contributed a “Book Review” on “The Physical Development Plan for the Kathmandu Valley” published by His Majesty’s Government of Nepal, Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications, Town Planning Office (which was upgraded later to the Department of Housing and Physical Planning along the lines recommended in the Report). He was also a member of the Editorial Board for *The Himalayan Review*.

He had been very active among the Americans as well as in the Nepalese Community in America and he was regarded as “a trailblazer and mentor for Nepalese students” as he guided students from Nepal into US culture. He understood the notion of what America was about with the different groups there. He was very active in groups of Nepalese including the Association of the Nepalese in Midwest America, which had its 1999 Annual Convention in Bowling Green, Ohio. He was also closely associated with Nepalese American Council. Other memberships included Association of American Geographers, Regional Science Association, and American Geographical Society. He was very active in Himalayan Studies Association as well and when I was in South Illinois University (SIU) as a Visiting Professor in 1974, Professor Yadu Nath Khanal and Dr. Mohan N. Shrestha had come to Carbondale, Illinois to attend one of the important meetings of the Association.

He is survived by his wife one son and one daughter.

Uttam Sagar Shrestha