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In Memory of Dr. Herbert E. Whitlock

Dr. Herbert E. Whitlock, chemist and environmental scientist-advocate, died Tuesday, December 8, at the Cape Cod Hospital in Hyannis. He was 88 and lived in Eastham. He was born to missionary parents, Herbert A. and Margaret Whitlock, on April 20, 1910, and spent the first 10 years of his life in Lahore, India (present-day Pakistan). His first wife, the former Shirley Billings, died in 1964.

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The cause of Dr. Whitlock's death was cardiac arrest resulting from pneumonia, congestive heart failure, and a urinary tract infection.

He founded the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod (APCC) in 1968 together with his second wife, the former Helen ("Bobsie") Stevens, through a small group of local citizens. He helped make the APCC a leading educator of the general public on Cape Cod environmental issues and served as the APCC's first president for five years. Key issues on which the APCC presented an informed and respected voice during that time included groundwater protection, pesticide use, and wastewater treatment. Dr. Whitlock pushed the APCC to dispel false myths concerning Cape Cod's drinking water: the myth of that water coming from an underground river for example. The APCC published a report in 1973 on Cape Cod groundwater by Dr. Arthur Strahler that is still used in university courses to address water resource and land planning issues.

The time during which he was both president and a board member of the APCC (1968-1973) has been described by some as "lean times" for the organization. In the early days, the staff consisted of Dr. Whitlock and a volunteer secretary. Due to his perseverance and conviction, the organization grew and strengthened considerably. The APCC continues now to be a knowledgeable and prominent voice in current environmental debates on Cape Cod, including, for example, the preservation of open space on the Cape.

Between 1973 and 1981, Dr. Whitlock was a notably outspoken board member of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. He pushed that society and other organizations to adopt a strong advocacy role on environmental issues and to educate the public in the basic science behind those issues. And he felt that Massachusetts Audubon had a major role to play in environmental science and conservation.

He was also a leading voice through his involvement in several other Cape Cod environmental and political organizations. He was a key figure in the founding and establishment of the Cape and Islands Democratic Council

and of the Eastham Forum, an independent group for thoughtful consideration of town issues. He was a member of both the Cape Cod Planning and Economic Development Commission's Water Resources Advisory Council and the Eastham Water Resources Advisory Committee. And during 1969 and 1970, he was a board member of the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History. Also, he wrote heartfelt and frequent letters to the editors of local newspapers on a wide range of social, environmental, political, and educational topics. A great number of these letters were published and widely praised.

Dr. Whitlock's strict adherence to scientific rationale and his ability to recall anecdotes from early childhood were central to his self-expression. He could hold a dinner party spellbound with a twinkle in his eye and a fascinating tale of a train of animals in British India all out for a walk with his family or any of a number of other stories from those times. He went on from India to seven years of school in Scotland, homeland of his mother, Margaret, and her family. He moved to America in 1927.

As he often noted, it was - at the age of five - his decision to work with color that dominated all that followed. Throughout his childhood, colors captured his imagination, but he wasn't sure at first how to act on that passion. A crucial next step came at eight years old, when he was impressed with the colors in a particularly influential encyclopedia article on gas discharge technology; it was the colors in the picture that drew chemistry and physics to his attention.

At the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio, he chose science over art to obtain a B.A. in Chemistry in 1931. This was followed by an M.S. and Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from New York University. As a dye chemist with the Pharma-chemical Corporation, he created dyes for coloring textiles. In particular, he was instrumental, in the early 1940's, in the development and use of azo dyes - an important and widely varied range of dyes derived from organic chemicals such as benzidine and still commonly used today in dyeing cotton-based products. Before his retirement, he was appointed director of chemical research for Pharma, which was by then a subsidiary of the German chemical and pharmaceutical corporation Bayer AG.

He and his first wife, Shirley, lived in Clark, New Jersey, where they pursued together their interests in square dancing and duplicate bridge, and where his passion for color led him to pursue flower-gardening.

Dr. Whitlock retired in 1966, and moved with his second wife, Helen, to Cape Cod in 1967, where his hobbies included reading, designing and making jewelry, abstract painting, photography, birding, and landscaping. He was an avid reader, dedicated to staying on top of the latest developments in all of science, but also reading even more generally in science fiction, mysteries,

politics, economics, and other literature. He collected orchids, modern paintings, snuff bottles, blown glass artworks, Buddha statues, bonsai trees, and carvings of animals. He was especially fond of animals - not only his and Helen's cats and dogs, but also the monkeys, peacocks, and elephants of his childhood in India, and the chipmunks, squirrels, raccoons, opossums, birds, and other wildlife of Cape Cod.

He is survived by his loving wife, Helen; a brother, Maurice; his son, Ian; his granddaughter, Erika Taylor; his grandson, Peter; his nephew, Bruce; his nieces, Edith Carlson and Maureen Michal; and several grand-nieces and grand-nephews.

The family respects his wishes to not hold a service. Memorial donations may be made to the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod (P.O. Box 636, Orleans, MA 02653), and to the Massachusetts Audubon Society (208 South Great Rd., Lincoln, MA 01773).