

# Introduction to the speech of John Richardson as he accepted the System Dynamics Society 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award

Dennis Meadows  
Cambridge, MA, 23 July, 2013

Over the years I have spoken often to the participants of this annual meeting. None of those earlier presentations has given me as much pleasure as being invited today to introduce this year's Lifetime Achievement Award winner, John Richardson.

Many, many people in this room have devoted their professional lives to practicing, teaching, and promoting our field. They have accomplished a great deal, and their work will endure. Thus to be singled out as a recipient of our society's Lifetime Achievement award is an incredible honor.

I will not use my few minutes to justify John's award. The reputation of the committee and the substance of John's talk about his work will do that well enough. Instead I will talk briefly about the larger context of his professional life. Today John will describe three of his projects that lead to significant books. It is important to understand that those examples are only a very small part of the results from his incredibly diverse and productive career. In his work, extending more than half a century, John has accomplished much and been many things. But throughout it all he has been a learner, a meticulous scientist, and a consummate teacher.

John has a wonderful curiosity; he is always eager to acquire new insights. I first met him in 1973 when we served as a faculty members in a two-week workshop in Hannover, Germany. The session was created to ask how system dynamics models could give insights about global problems. Interest in that question has been an important foundation of his career. That question also led John to participate in the first Balaton Group meeting in 1982. The Balaton Group is an informal network of 50 individuals from 30 nations that meets every year for five days, so that its members can teach each other about problems and prospects for the globe's natural resources and environment. His continued interest in learning will take him to the Group's 32nd meeting in Hungary this autumn.

He is a meticulous social scientist. For his study of war and peace in Sri Lanka, John visited that nation frequently over a period of 20 years, meeting the key participants in the strife and compiling a massive data base on conflict that will long remain an important resource for professionals in many fields.

John is a skilled and dedicated teacher. He taught system dynamics to his American University students until he retired from that faculty. For him mentoring was not just a 9-5 job. At American University he took an apartment in the school's dormitory, so that he could be a counselor for his students around the clock.

He co-directed a week-long course on system dynamics in Portugal to a group of young leaders active in environmental issues. He created a formal briefing on hunger, and trained teachers who eventually took it to thousands of concerned citizens around the world.

Now at the age of 75, he is about to start a two-year contract teaching Asian students the principles of our field at a university in Singapore. And at the same time he is convincing that country's leaders about the merits of the approach, so that his students will have jobs when they graduate.

I have liked and admired John for over 40 years. As he comes up to speak, I ask you to join me in applauding his many contributions.