



Dr. David William Brown

February 9, 2026

Dr. David William Brown (November 10, 1931 – February 9, 2026)

Dr. David William Brown, MA, PhD of Middletown, Rhode Island, passed away on February 9, 2026, at 94, having lived a good, long life dedicated to education, agriculture, conservation and service. Dave Brown grew up on farms and apple orchards in Connecticut and Rhode Island during the Great Depression and World War II. Stories about the Dust Bowl, the displacement of his own family, and scenes of the ravages of war led to his interest in soil conservation and his commitment to fighting rural poverty and world hunger. As a young man, Dave was active in the 4-H and the American Baptist Church. After graduating from Lyman High in Wallingford, CT, he went on to study agronomy at the University of Connecticut, agricultural economics at Cornell, and earned a Ph.D. in agricultural production and land economics, advanced economic theory, and statistics at Iowa State University.

As a young professor with the University of Tennessee in the mid-1950s, Dave taught agricultural extension staff how to use local surveys and practical socio-economic analyses when shaping recommendations for farmers. He then worked as a visiting professor in Singapore and Malaysia helping urban students do studies in rural villages. He was also part of a team that assessed early methods used for the Green Revolution in Asia, which sought to improve family farm productivity, earnings and nutrition.

Other pioneering roles included leading Texas A&M University programs, encouraging attention for small farms and to Black and Hispanic rural populations. With the Iowa-USAID team in Peru in the 1960s, he also led work by economics and law faculty to help shape land reform, regional development and national policy.

Returning to the University of Tennessee in 1968, he worked for more than a decade as an international professor of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. There he provided opportunities to returned Peace Corps volunteers with interests in improving the lives of the poor, seeding a network of students and colleagues that continue to exchange ideas today about agriculture and economics.

Then in 1982, he went to Rome for a post with the UN Food and Agricultural Organization, where he fostered analyses of development issues including drought and hunger in Africa through the eyes of rural and displaced people. Later he went on to work on USAID-funded projects supporting food-crops diversification in Indonesia and helping to establish stronger roles for women in rural studies and university outreach programs in Pakistan.

Dave retired to Newport in 1993, where he brought his experience to many roles in Rhode Island. He served on the Newport Planning Board, the Newport Tree Commission, the Eastern RI Conservation District Board, and was a founding member and later co-chair of the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) for environmental cleanups of nearby Navy sites. In 1993, he was presented a US Senate Citation for his conservation efforts and service to the community from Senator Jack Reed. Locally, Dave taught at Salve Regina University and was active with the Newport Council for International Visitors.

He loved all kinds of music, especially classical and folk, and was a life-long

radio enthusiast, joining an amateur radio emergency response network in Aquidneck Island in his 80s and 90s. For more about Dave's career and interests, please visit his website: <http://restlessageconomist.info>.

With him through all of this was Dave's wife of 55 years, Jean ("Jeanne") Margaret Young Brown. She relished their world travels together and throughout her life Jeanne was a well-known community leader in the areas of juvenile justice, sociology, drug and tobacco abuse prevention, historic preservation, and was beloved as a reference librarian in Newport, RI. Jeanne believed that one should do something to help other people every day. Dave remained devoted to Jean after she passed away in 2011, far too soon for him and their family.

Dave and Jeanne are survived by their daughter Cheryl, who moved to Rhode Island to be close to her father in his final years, son Kevin and his wife Yolanda of Miami, two granddaughters, Natalia who is based in metro NYC and Valentina, who is a student at University of Florida, his sister, Barbara Wanner of Burlington, VT and numerous nieces and nephews in Arizona, California, Florida, and Ohio. Dave is preceded in death by his father William (Bill) Horace Brown of Newport, brother Richard (Dick) Brown of Boca Raton, niece Cynthia Holly Kastenbaum of Norwood, MA and mother Elsie Miriam Lovett Brown, who was also part of the John Clarke community. Dave and Elsie received wonderful care from the nursing and other staff at John Clarke Nursing Center, and Dave's final days were enriched by the care of visiting nurses and chaplains from South Coast Health's hospice program, and by frequent visits from his friends and neighbors in the John Clarke community.

A memorial celebrating the lives of Dave and Jeanne Brown will be held at 10 am on Saturday, March 21st, at John Clarke Retirement Center in Middletown, RI. In lieu of flowers, please consider a financial donation to the RI Tree

Council, the Chordoma Foundation, or a donation of your time to efforts that make the world a more sustainable, equitable, democratic and just place.