

# David George Pitt, March 1, 1948–January 21, 2025

Daniel J. Nadenicek

Each year as his garden matured, Dave Pitt would upload and distribute to family and friends a digital image of himself standing among corn stalks that rose above his head with the following caption: “Outstanding in his field.” One of those pictures was the program cover image for his spring 2025 celebration of life held in Minneapolis. “Outstanding in his field” is both a reflection of Dave’s sense of humor and an accurate descriptor of his more than 140 journal articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings publications; his recognition as a fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners and the Council of Educators of Landscape Architecture (CELA); his CELA Outstanding Educators Award; and other recognitions and accomplishments too numerous to describe here. However, if he were to admit to being outstanding in his field at all, it would be as a mentor to generations of students (more than 4,500, as his obituary reports) and to each wave of young faculty members at the University of Minnesota, across the nation, and internationally.

A student of Erv Zube in the 1980s, Dave was a leading participant in enhancing landscape architecture’s contributions to quality research and scholarship. He developed an early form of photoshop before the application existed to assess both physical changes to the landscape and societal responses to those changes. He also worked with an interdisciplinary group of researchers to study geodesign and how that approach could enhance grassroots participation. Because of those and other long-term projects, Dave was able to garner major grant support from the National Science Foundation and U.S. Department of Agriculture. While a continuous flow of research dissemination was a hallmark of his own career, he was one of the best

in the discipline in teaching those skills to junior faculty. He coedited *Landscape Journal (LJ)* for seven years (2010–2016) and stepped in again to assist with its editing for another two years during an *LJ* transition period prior to the pandemic. *Landscape Journal* provided him with the opportunity to reach young scholars across the nation and abroad. For each article submission, he asked, “Is there potential for the research to add to the knowledge base of the profession?” If the answer was yes, he would work tirelessly with the author to elevate the manuscript to a publishable form. Those who published in *LJ* during his editorial years will attest to the focused, hands-on assistance he gave each of them.

From those many individual interactions, Dave drew broader conclusions that he reported in his many editorial introductions. Some of his editorial comments—such as his predictions about the importance of data mining before the flourishing of AI, his discussion of race well before George Floyd, and his insightful commentary on design as research just as design thinking was catching on in numerous disciplines—were prescient if not prophetic. Although Dave’s own work was driven by science and social science, he had a full grasp of the profession and discipline of landscape architecture, believed wholeheartedly in the importance of all aspects of landscape-based research, and lauded *Landscape Journal’s* potential to be a preeminent agent in the dissemination of those essential concepts.

Daniel J. Nadenicek is Professor and Dean Emeritus at the University of Georgia’s College of Environment and Design. He joined the college in fall 2008 as dean and served until 2018.