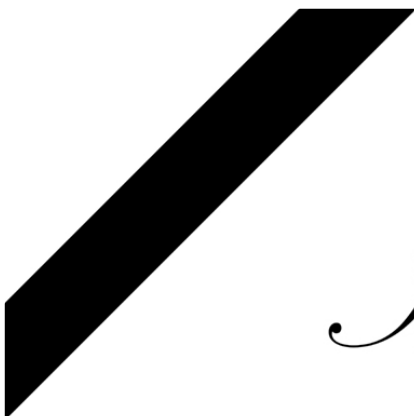


In memoriam: Gary Carl Steinhardt

October 22, 2026



In Memoriam

Gary Carl Steinhardt
1944–2025



Gary Steinhardt, a member of ASA and SSSA for 56 years, passed away on Dec. 12, 2025. He was born Sept. 13, 1944, in Lansing, MI to Carl Frank Steinhardt and Doris

Alzina Steinhardt (Sibley) and grew up on the family farm in Olive Township, Clinton County, Michigan.

He completed kindergarten through eighth grade at one of the last remaining one-room country schools in the state. In the fall of 1962, he entered Michigan State University where he received a B.S. degree in Agriculture with Honor in 1966.

During summer vacations, he began his career in soil science by mapping soils in Shiawassee, Livingston, Clinton, and St. Clair counties in Michigan as an employee of the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station. He enrolled in graduate school at Michigan State University where he received the M.S. degree in Soil Science in 1968 under the direction of Dr. Eugene P. Whiteside.

Steinhardt had enrolled in the Reserve Officer Training Corps at Michigan State. He served in the U.S. Army and Army Reserve, including a tour in Vietnam, and retired as a Colonel after 30 years of service.

In 1971, Steinhardt enrolled in graduate school at Purdue University. During his graduate education, he formed and headed the Purdue Soil Survey Laboratory. Three of his student employees later received Ph.D. degrees and went on to highly successful careers. In 1973, he married Nguyen Thi Thinh at Faith Presbyterian Church in West Lafayette, IN. His daughter Angela was born in 1976, which is also when he received his Ph.D. in Agronomy under the direction of Dr. Donald P. Franzmeier.

Dr. Steinhardt began his career as Assistant Professor in the Agronomy Department at Purdue University in 1976. His assignment was primarily as an Extension Specialist in Soils and Land Use. He continued work began by Professor Harry Galloway and Dr. Joseph Yahner utilizing soil survey information to assist local officials in making better land use decisions. He involved in the effort to bring to the attention of the public the

need to preserve prime agricultural land for future generations.

During “trouble shooting” on-farm visits with farmers who were observing “tall corn/short corn” variable early growth and ragged emergence, he identified soil compaction as the likely problem by observing soil properties in the field. This was controversial at the time because there was little research on the effects of soil compaction in the Midwest. More challenging was the research that suggested it was not much of a concern. He developed studies with graduate students and Dr. Gary Krutz to show the potential impact of soil compaction, which is now recognized as a severe problem in the Midwest. His daughter Sarah was born in 1979. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1982 and to Full Professor in 1990.

Professor Steinhardt was experienced in identifying properties that impact use of land for various purposes. His clientele included everyone from middle school to seasoned professionals. He coordinated the 4-H/FFA Soil Judging program for many years, which involved thousands of young people. He also coached the Purdue Soils Team. For many years, he coordinated field exercises for the Indiana Registry of Soil Science.

Dr. Steinhardt received the following honors: Fellow, Indiana Academy of Science, 1983. Fellow, Soil and Water Conservation Society, 1996; The North American Colleges and Teachers awarded him the NACTA Judging and Student Service Award, 2017. Purdue College of Agriculture awarded him the David C. Pfendler Outstanding Undergraduate Counselor Award, 2015. The Purdue College of Agriculture and Indiana Prairie Farmer Magazine named him an Honorary Master Farmer, 2022. He received Outstanding Service Award, Indiana Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association, 2022. From the FFA, he received the FFA Distinguished Service Award and Golden Shovel, 2025.

He authored more than 30 scientific publications and over 100 Extension bulletins plus numerous magazine articles and news stories during his career. He has held membership in multiple professional organizations and was active in community affairs.

He has two daughters, Dr. Angela A. Steinhardt, M.D. (husband: Jonathan Sobieski) of Milton, MA; and Dr. Sarah Steinhardt Reiger, Pharm.D., J.D., M.S. (husband: Curtis) of Martinsville, IN and four grandchildren.

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