

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR DONALD THEODORE WITIAK

Donald Theodore Witiak, professor of medicinal chemistry and former dean of the School of Pharmacy, died May 22, 1998 at age 62 from complications related to a stroke he had suffered the week before. His stroke came while he was excitedly pursuing his latest idea for designing a new type of anti-cancer drug. Six publications and patents resulting from this work appeared over a two year period following his untimely death.

Don was born on November 16, 1935 in West Allis, Wisconsin, the son of Theodore and Elvi (Dahlbacka) Witiak. He graduated from West Allis Central High School in 1954. On November 11, 1955, he married the former Deanne Beth Knapton of West Allis.

He attended UW-Milwaukee as a freshman and earned a B.S. (with honors) degree in 1958 and a Ph.D. degree in medicinal chemistry from UW-Madison in 1961. He began his teaching career as assistant and associate professor at the University of Iowa School of Pharmacy before moving to Ohio State University in 1967. He was promoted to full professor of medicinal chemistry and pharmacognosy in 1971, and in 1985 was named the Kimberly Professor. He headed his division in the School of Pharmacy from 1973-1982, was director of the Pharmaceutical and Toxicological Research Institute from 1982-1987, and was director for basic research at OSU's Comprehensive Cancer Center from 1987 until his retirement from OSU in 1993.

Don was the recipient of numerous teaching and research honors, and was the author of more than 250 articles, abstracts, book chapters and patents. He was a fellow of the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the APhA Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences and the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists. He received the APhA Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences Research Achievement Award in Pharmaceutical and Medicinal Chemistry. He was a member of the editorial boards of the European Journal of Medicinal Chemistry and the American Chemical Society's Journal of Medicinal Chemistry. Don was very active in ACS and European Medicinal Chemistry affairs and organized and participated in numerous symposia devoted to emerging science. He was elected chairman the American Chemical Society's Division of Medicinal Chemistry in 1988 and also served as councilor for the Medicinal Chemistry Division. In 1987 was named an honorary professor, Xi'an Medical University, Xi'an, China. Throughout his career, he also was a consultant to a number of companies in the pharmaceutical industry worldwide.

In 1993, Don answered the call of his alma mater to become the seventh dean of the School of Pharmacy. Don had to be persuaded to take this position but he was proud of his Wisconsin roots and decided to take the risky step into academic administration in order to help his alma mater in their quest for a new building. His acceptance coincided with a strong commitment by the university to build the first new School of Pharmacy building in Wisconsin history. Witiak was instrumental in guiding the early efforts to raise money for this venture. Ground-breaking for the \$45 million structure, took place May 8, 1998, two weeks before his death. Rennebohm Hall, as the new School of Pharmacy is named, was completed in June 2001; more than \$15 million dollars in donations were raised from 1993 to 2001 to enable its construction.

During Witiak's tenure as dean, the school also began detailed planning to change its pharmacist training curriculum from the bachelor of science degree to the Pharm. D. degree. The school's formal switch to the new professional degree, which parallels the national trend, occurred in 1999.

(continued)

Don Witiak never relished the day-to-day responsibilities of running the School of Pharmacy and in 1995, he resigned the deanship and returned to his research in cancer chemotherapy. His work in the design and development of new drugs was aimed at the causes of cancer, the spread and treatment of cancer, and coronary artery disease. Research was always his first love and he realized he preferred to spend his time on that. He also loved to teach both graduate students and the undergraduate pharmacy students. His booming voice could be heard down the hallways during his lectures on introductory medicinal chemistry.

Don Witiak is survived by his wife, Deanne, and two children, Mark Witiak, and Elizabeth Horn. In August 2000, the American Chemical Society Division of Medicinal Chemistry held a symposium in honor of Don Witiak in Washington D.C. Former students and distinguished scientists presented lectures to a gathering of over 200 attendees. His widow, Deanne, was a guest of the Medicinal Chemistry Division and spoke briefly about life with Don and his love of research.

Don Witiak was respected for his deep commitment to education and his ability to inspire students, many who achieved outstanding careers in the pharmaceutical industry; most remained his friend for life. Don lived life passionately. He loved socializing and especially a good laugh, and always seemed to find time to enjoy life outside of chemistry. At Iowa, he learned to fly airplanes and embraced this hobby until a close call involving a large cloud. At Ohio State, he lived on a farm where he loved to raise prize cattle. He loved fishing, traveling, the visual arts, and especially the time he spent with his grandchildren and rest of his family and friends, including his dog, Buster. His love of life and friendship will be greatly missed by them all.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Charles T. Lauhon

Daniel H. Rich, Chair

Melvin Weinswig