

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS RONALD L. DAGGETT

A Madison native born December 18, 1915, Professor Emeritus Ronald L. Daggett graduated from the UW-Madison in mechanical engineering with a BS in 1938 and an MS in 1939. After motorcycling from Madison to the West Coast with a friend, Daggett went to work in plastics manufacturing at RCA in Camden, New Jersey, later moving to Blessing Associates in New York City. He returned to the midwest after the war in 1945 as a design engineer for Ideal Industries in Sycamore, Illinois. In 1946, he returned to the UW-Madison as an assistant professor of mechanical engineering. He was promoted to associate professor in 1948 and to professor in 1956. What made his initial appointment so significant is that, in addition to his regular teaching duties, he started offering an elective course titled "Plastics and Plastic Processes." He did not know at the time that this was the first engineering plastics course taught in the world, and that he was alone in his quest for plastics engineering education. He did not have a textbook, notes or a mentor. This course has been offered every semester for the past six decades. In 1990 the course was split into two courses: plastics design and plastics processes. Today, they are the most popular electives for mechanical engineering undergraduate and graduate students. Meanwhile, the Polymer Engineering Center, featuring one of the nation's strongest research groups stands as a testament to Daggett's pioneering foresight.

As the years passed, Professor Daggett not only taught, but also became a researcher. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, with Dr. Vincent L. Gott of the UW Medical School he co-developed an innovative prosthetic heart valve. This patented valve was used in several hundred heart patients over a four-year period.

In 1961 Daggett founded Engineering Industries in the basement of an abandoned auto repair shop in nearby Fitchburg. There he engineered and developed injection molding techniques for small precision plastic parts, the first being hearing aid battery liners for Ray-O-Vac. From the beginning, the company carried his engineering philosophy of solving the problems that no one else wanted to tackle and taking them on to a solution in the form of a finished product. He spent countless hours in a small machine shop in the basement of his home, machining the most intricate molds and features for parts that everyone else had deemed impossible to make. His basement became legendary as a place where former students and young entrepreneurs built prototypes, molds and parts that went on to become the seeds for some of the more successful companies in the State of Wisconsin.

Professor Daggett retired from the university in 1975, after 29 years. As recognition for his contributions, the College of Engineering honored him with a Distinguished Service Citation in 1991.

In 1964 Daggett was introduced to sketching. Over forty years he developed into a skilled watercolorist, drawing and painting only "on location." He completed an estimated 600 drawings. Along the way he developed portable painting desks. His Proportioner is sold as a painting aid. He rarely sold his work, but has given away approximately 150 pieces of work to family and friends. The work includes montages of UW-Madison buildings, windows, cupolas, steeples, and signs that document a history of Madison and its environs. Additional paintings of waterfronts and fishing tugs record a vanishing history of Kewaunee, Algoma, Gloucester (Massachusetts) and the Seattle (Washington) Fisherman's Terminal.

In his spare time he recorded Madison flora evidenced in thousands of photographs; filled multiple notebooks with his calligraphy work, much of it documenting the haikus of Dorothy, his wife, who died five years ago. To keep in shape he became a skilled figure skater and then took up squash, playing the game into his 70's. He loved music and played the violin in a community orchestra. For relaxation he was

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a voracious reader. And for a change of pace, friends recall his installation of a hog shed behind his factory for a blacksmith shop, where he could be found pounding away in this unheated environment in the dead of winter.

Marrying Dorothy Reid after they graduated from UW-Madison, they raised two children. A daughter, four grandchildren and four great grandchildren survive him.

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