

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS DONALD S. ERMER

Donald S. Ermer, professor emeritus of the Departments of Mechanical Engineering and Industrial and Systems Engineering, passed away on December 13, 2007 at age 75 from pancreatic cancer at a local hospice center.

Don was born in Milwaukee, graduated from UW-Madison in 1954 with his bachelor's degree, worked in industry, and served in the U.S. Army. He joined the Department of Mechanical Engineering at UW-Madison in 1959 as a full-time instructor and completed his master's degree in 1962. He then received a Ford Foundation Fellowship, earning his doctorate in mechanical engineering in 1966. Don and his family moved to State College, Pennsylvania in 1966, where he was on the faculty in the Department of Industrial Engineering at Penn State University. In 1971 he returned to the UW-Madison as an associate professor of mechanical engineering. He taught and conducted research in the areas of manufacturing optimization and quality improvement. In 1980 he was promoted to full professor and later established an affiliate appointment with the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering at UW-Madison. Don was the Procter and Gamble Bascom Professor in Total Quality when he retired in 2002.

Don had a passion for quality both in his professional and personal life, working with many organizations throughout the world. He established strong and lasting ties with the Far East, especially Singapore where he and his family spent a year in 1972 while he taught and worked for the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Professor Ermer returned intermittently to Singapore for 27 years. In 2003 he was appointed to an advisory committee for the Industrial and Systems Engineering Department of the National University of Singapore in recognition of his expertise in industrial engineering and the quality process.

He worked with companies large and small to improve their manufacturing and quality processes, and he was a member of many professional societies including the American Society for Quality (ASQ). Professor Ermer received the Eugene L. Grant Medal for the year 2000 from ASQ. This medal is presented to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in the development and presentation of meritorious educational programs in quality.

Don likewise provided leadership in the field of quality at both the state and national levels. He helped to establish and promote the State of Wisconsin Forward Award, for which he received a special certificate of commendation from Governor Doyle for his nearly 10 years of service. Don is also the only UW-Madison faculty member to be an examiner (in 1988, 1995, and 1999) for the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. In 1988 he received a certificate – “In Recognition of his Outstanding Service to the Nation” – from the United States Secretary of Commerce as one of 100 professionals in the field of quality chosen to be on the inaugural Board of Examiners.

Don also volunteered his time and talents to make significant contributions to society. In 1997 Don received the Ragnar E. Onstad Award for Service to Society from the College of Engineering (CoE). The CoE dean wrote: “Dr. Ermer's pursuit of quality excellence in all processes, not just manufacturing, has produced significant, deep-rooted positive changes in society.” He was also recognized in 1997 when he received the Edward J. Oakley Award from ASQ for his commitment, persistence, and constancy of purpose in promoting total quality.

(continued)

Don received many letters of appreciation from former students for being both an inspiring teacher and a mentor to them, which led to their growth and success in contributing to the welfare of society. He was seen as a “student’s professor,” a patient and considerate person who made students feel that he was accessible and interested in their work. He cared deeply for their professional development and taught them important lessons beyond the materials in the textbook.

Don was a passionate sailor. He raced E-scows and then an Ultimate 20 with the Mendota Yacht Club. In the winter, Don turned to iceboating and raced a Nite with the Four Lakes Ice Yacht Club. When neither of those would do, there was a sail board under the front porch or he would look for a ride with someone from the Hoofers Sailing Club.

Survivors include Phyllis, his wife of 48 years; daughter, Ellen, her children Erik and Elyse; son, Eric (Gayle), their children Daniel, Brett, and Samantha; his brother, Kenneth (Becky); and sister-in-law, Carla (Joseph) Moha.

Don Ermer served his students, our university, our state, nation, and world with exceptional dedication, assisting numerous students, faculty, and other people in both their professional and personal lives. He did so with complete integrity and a high level of compassion and zeal. We have all been enriched by Don’s outstanding service and contributions.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Marvin F. DeVries

Glen E. Myers

Harold J. Steudel, chair