
Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison On the Death of Professor Emeritus Peter Paul Dorner

Professor Emeritus Peter Paul Dorner died on June 4, 2018, at the age of 93. He was born January 13, 1925 and grew up on a small dairy farm near Luxemburg, Wisconsin. After completing elementary school, he continued to work on the family farm instead of attending high school—common for farm boys at that time. In 1944 at age 19, he enlisted in the U.S. Army serving two years as an infantry soldier in the South Pacific. When he returned home after discharge in 1946, he worked again with his parents on the family farm.

The veterans program advisor at the local high school encouraged Pete (as he has always been called by friends and colleagues) to enroll in an On-The-Farm Training Program supported under the GI Bill. While assisting the farm training program, the Luxemburg high school principal discovered Pete's exceptional academic talent and suggested that Pete prepare for the high school equivalency (GED) exams and consider going on to college. While continuing farm work, Pete successfully completed multiple GED correspondence courses and was awarded a high school diploma by Luxemburg Public Schools in May 1948. He was proud that his final English exam was signed by Helen C. White, UW-Madison's well-known professor of English.

In the summer of 1949, Pete traveled to Madison with his high school principal to meet with the dean of the College of Agriculture. The dean agreed to admit Pete under a 'special student' classification. During his first year, Pete earned the highest GPA in the college's freshman class and completed his B.S. degree (majoring in agricultural economics) in three years.

Pete went on to earn a M.S. in agricultural economics in 1953 from the University of Tennessee, where he remained for one year as an assistant professor. He returned to UW-Madison as an assistant professor for two years in the Department of Agricultural Economics teaching farm management to extension agents. That experience, plus his farm background, began to shape his academic thinking reflected in one of his first published papers: *The Farm Problem: A Challenge to Social Invention*. In 1956, he enrolled in the doctoral program in economics at Harvard University under the direction of John Kenneth Galbraith, studying the economic conditions of Native Americans in the American Southwest. He received his Ph.D. in 1959 and returned to the UW-Madison Department of Agricultural Economics as an associate professor. He was promoted to full professor in 1962.

In 1963, Pete was invited by the newly established UW Land Tenure Center (LTC) to organize an LTC research program in Santiago, Chile. He served two years as program director and visiting professor at the University of Chile, directing land tenure and development research and supervising graduate students from Chile and Wisconsin. Upon his return to UW-Madison, he was named LTC director, a post he held from 1965 to 1971, interrupted by a two-year leave of absence (1967-68) to serve as Senior Staff Economist with the President's Council of Economic Advisors. Pete was selected by his colleagues to serve as chair of the Department of Agricultural Economics from 1972-1976.

Pete's primary research and policy focus was on institutional and structural change as part of international economic development. His work began with the Chilean program and later expanded internationally. He fostered a more comprehensive understanding of the structural issues related to land tenure reform, rural employment, land rights of small farm producers, and

the value of collective organization of transportation, marketing and processing. He brought experience from the Wisconsin dairy farm and the study of Native American land rights and applied it to economic development abroad. He published the first book on the role of land reform in economic development titled: *Latin American Land Reforms in Theory and Practice*.

Pete's writing was remarkably clear, comprehensive and easy to understand. His papers and commentaries were in demand by both academics and policy makers. Pete never sold himself as a keynote speaker—he was always modest and humble about his own point of view. But his writing skills and broad experience resulted in regular invitations to serve on international boards and study commissions, often assigned the task of editor.

Pete served for ten years as member of the UN Development Program (UNDP) evaluating land tenure and reform legislation. He was appointed in the 1970s to the FAO Special Committee on Agrarian Reform for which he authored the committee report to the UN General Assembly. He chaired the International Seminar on Resources and Development which resulted in an authored book on natural resources and development. He served as consultant to USAID and the World Bank on projects in Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, Barbados, the Philippines, Malaysia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. He was project director and campus coordinator, 1983-87, of the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities (MUCIA).

In 1980, Pete was named Dean of International Studies and Programs at UW-Madison, reaching the pinnacle of his career. While serving in that capacity for eight years, he expanded his research interests to include the development of new institutions for the advancement of international peace and economic wellbeing.

Pete was a colleague who was fun to be around. He loved life, gardening and music and was a happy gregarious person who cared about others. He loved nothing better than a glass of beer and a songfest. Pete is survived by his wife, Lois (Hartnig) Dorner, and his children: Catherine A. Mathwick (husband, Mark Mathwick), Gregory L. Dorner (wife, Sharon Larson), Paul J. Dorner, Sara J. Lambert (husband, John Becker), and Carolyn R. Dorner.

Professor Dorner retired in 1989 after a long and distinguished record of professional achievements. His research, teaching and writing contributed in many ways to a broader understanding of economic development and greatly expanded the reputation of the University of Wisconsin as a major contributor to international studies. Pete Dorner was a Wisconsin farm boy whose upbringing drove his passion to assist rural people everywhere.

The Memorial Resolution Committee

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