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ith the unexpected death of Professor Frank Worzala on August 15, 1996, the University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Engineering lost a great friend, a dedicated teacher and an innovative researcher. To honor the memory of Professor Worzala, a new memorial scholarship endowment has been established at the University of Wisconsin Foundation. This fund, started by gifts from friends and family, will help add to the legacy that Frank created during his 29 years at the university.

Frank was born in Milwaukee on November 13, 1933. He attended Milwaukee schools and then UW-Madison, majoring in metallurgical engineering. While an undergraduate, Frank was very active as a member of the gymnastics team and as head cheerleader. He also made long-lasting friends in Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity. After graduation in 1956, Frank served as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

After his service commitment, Frank attended graduate school at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh where he was awarded a Westinghouse-AEC Fellowship. He received his PhD in 1964.

Frank joined the faculty of the materials science and engineering department at UW-Madison in 1967. During his distinguished career at the UW, Frank authored many academic papers and was the recipient of numerous awards. He served as chair of the department from 1990 to 1996 during a period of great change and growth in the College of Engineering.

He also helped a number of Wisconsin companies develop new technologies and improve their products. Among the companies he worked with were Fisher-Barton Corporation of Watertown, Thermal Spray Technologies of Sun Prairie, Trek Bicycle Corporation of Waterloo, and Resource Management Associates (RMA) of Madison. He specialized in plasma spray coatings and other technologies to improve the surface properties of materials. It was Frank’s collaboration with former graduate student Bill Lenling that helped create Thermal Spray Technologies in 1993.

In 1979 Frank played a significant role in the first project undertaken by newly-founded RMA, and traveled to Zurich, Switzerland to assess state-of-the art energy-efficient technologies in the metals-processing industry. During subsequent years he continued his close association with RMA and many of its key staff. At the time of his death, Frank was deeply involved in an RMA energy efficiency project, conducted in close collaboration with the U.S. foundry industry, particularly in Wisconsin.

Despite Frank’s technical accomplishments and effectiveness as a researcher, he was proudest of his reputation as a teacher. The winner of many campus teaching awards, Frank had a caring, hands-on approach to teaching that had an impact on a generation of students. He had great rapport with his students and went out of his way to make them feel that they were important. He always had time for everyone.

Not only is Frank remembered for his tireless service, scientific innovations and effectiveness as a teacher, he is also remembered for his vitality, his positive outlook and the enthusiasm with which he approached everything he did. Frank loved physical exercise and the outdoors. He competed as a runner and skier in numerous races including the Boston and Shakespeare Marathons, the 20-mile Syttende Mai Run and the 20-kilometer Lake Monona Run. He also completed 10 North American Birkebeiner country ski races and several triathlons. His last competition was the 1996 Madison Triathlon in which he won a silver medal in his age division. His death of a heart attack, while jogging on Picnic Point, came just days after a week-long backpacking trip to Colorado that took him to altitudes of 9,000-11,000 feet. When Frank retired in July 1996 as department chair, he was presented with a custom mountain bike made by undergraduate students from high-quality components.

The Frank J. Worzala Memorial Scholarship Fund has been established to provide undergraduate support for students in materials science and engineering. This support will be consistent with Frank’s many years of research in materials, his well-known devotion to undergraduates and his love of exercise and fitness. Contributors to this fund should make their check payable to the University of Wisconsin Foundation and send them to:

Frank Worzala Scholarship Fund, UW Foundation, 1848 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53705-4090.

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