

In memory of Professor William E. Sayle



It is with great sorrow that I write to inform members of our community of the death of Dr. William E. Sayle. In his final column in *The Interface*, Bill wrote of his battle with pancreatic cancer for the past four years. Sadly, that battle came to an end this past Saturday, February 2, 2008.

Bill received his BSEE and MSEE degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and his Ph.D. from the University of Washington. He joined the faculty in electrical engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology in 1970, just as Georgia Tech was beginning the transition from an undergraduate institution to a research university. He was the ECE associate chair for undergraduate affairs from 1988-2003 and, following retirement in 2003, served as director of undergraduate programs at Georgia Tech-Lorraine in France until 2007. Bill was a tireless advocate for students, putting in countless late night and weekend hours in addressing student issues, assigning teaching assistants, and meeting with prospective students and parents.

Throughout his career, Bill touched the lives of many people in the worldwide academic community. He was a leader and a pioneer in many areas. In the 1970s, he was a founding member of the IEEE Power Electronics Society, where he served in many leadership roles over the years. He was a champion of diversity and in recruiting underrepresented minorities and women to engineering and science, long before it became a national issue. He visited many high schools on behalf of the Southeastern Consortium for Minorities in Engineering, a role where he made many friends for Georgia Tech among high school administrators and students in the southern part of Georgia. In his 30-year career at Georgia Tech, Bill received the ECE outstanding teacher award twice, as well as the Georgia Tech outstanding teacher award and outstanding service award. Bill lent his voice and efforts to Georgia Tech faculty governance throughout his career, serving as an elected member of Institute-level committees, the Academic Senate, and the Executive Board.

Bill was a long-time member and active volunteer in the IEEE Education Society and the Electrical and Computer Engineering Division of ASEE. He was a Fellow of both IEEE and ASEE. He was the recipient of the Education Society's 2001 Meritorious Service Award and 2004 Achievement Award and of the ECE Division's 2001 Meritorious Service Award and 2006 ECE Distinguished Educator Award. Bill was the General Chair of the 1995 Frontiers in Education (FIE) Conference, which is still remembered for its all-vegetarian menu, and received the 1996 Ronald J. Schmitz Award for outstanding service to FIE.

Much of Bill's professional career was devoted to engineering accreditation, serving at various times as member and chair of the IEEE Committee on Engineering Accreditation Activities and the IEEE Accreditation Policy Council. He participated in more than 20 visits as a program evaluator, in addition to serving as a team chair and member of the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET for more than five years. Bill received the IEEE Educational Activities Board Meritorious Achievement Award in Accreditation Activities in 2004.

For roughly a decade, I worked with Bill on an almost-daily basis at Georgia Tech. He was a colleague and mentor, demonstrating that it was possible to build a successful career emphasizing education and student issues – even at a major research university. Without a doubt, I would not be where I am in my career without his guidance and assistance. Most importantly, Bill was my friend. I know that all of us will miss his knowledge, insight, effort, and presence in our lives.

Joseph L. A. Hughes

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