IN MEMORIAM

Richard Leslie Bell
Professor of Chemical Engineering, Emeritus
UC Davis
1934 — 2013

Richard Leslie Bell, Professor of Chemical Engineering Emeritus, died at his San Diego home on October 9, 2013 at the age of 79. Dick was born in Washington, DC on August 31, 1934. His parents moved to Salt Lake City, Utah during his early years where he received his elementary and high school education. He attended the University of Utah his freshman year of college and then transferred to Brigham Young University, where he received a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering. While at Brigham Young, he was president of his fraternity and active in the student chapter of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE) and the ROTC.

After graduating, he attended the University of Utah where he received another bachelor's degree in chemistry while working for the Rare Metals Corporation. During this time, he married Shirley Walker.

In 1958, he moved to Seattle to attend graduate school at the University of Washington where his worked focused on axial dispersion in multi- phase extraction columns. While in graduate school he had three children – Lesli Renee, Douglas Bradley and Stacy Lynn. After receiving his PhD, he joined a collaboration between Belding Scribner of University of Washington Medical School and the Albert Babb of the Chemical Engineering Department that developed the Mini I artificial kidney which formed the basis for the commercial machines now in use worldwide by about 750,000 patients.

In 1965, he was hired by Joe Smith as the third faculty member in the newly created Department of Chemical Engineering at UC Davis. He continued his research in separation processes and bio- engineering and held a joint appointment in the School of Veterinary Medicine. His fourth child, Janet Lee, was born after he arrived at Davis.

His career progressed rapidly and in 1970 he was appointed to succeed Joe Smith as the second chair of the Department of Chemical Engineering. He was active in the AIChE, frequently chairing sessions at annual meetings and later serving as the organizing hair for the annual meeting. He was also active in the Academic Senate, serving as Chair of the Committee on Academic Planning and Budget Review. He was beloved by his students and received numerous awards for teaching and advising.

Dick was involved in diving, both for his research and for recreation. As a result of diving at Lake Tahoe, he realized that the U.S. Navy Standard Decompression Tables did not provide adequate protection for high altitude diving. In 1976, he published revised tables for high altitude decompression. He also served as the chair of the UC Davis Diving Control Board which oversees all research diving by UC Davis employees. He negotiated the donation of the Bay Area Rapid Transit hyperbaric chamber to UC Davis. This chamber served as an emergency decompression facility for Northern California and was also used in biomedical research. In addition, Dick owned a Davis dive shop, The Diving Bell.

Dick took an early retirement in 1989. After retirement he moved to Southern California where he worked as the Director of Science and Technology for Luce, Forward, Hamilton and Scripps LLP. He continued teaching Chemical Engineering at UCLA on a part- time basis.

He was an ardent mountaineer, making an early passage of the Ptarmigan Traverse in the North Cascades and an attempt to climb the 21,000 foot Mt. Ausangati in Peru. He enjoyed sailing his boats, Tranquilo and Merryweather, and served as Commodore of the Santa Monica Windjammers Yacht Club in Marina del Rey. He was also a private pilot.

After retiring from Luce Forward, he spent much time at his Tahoe cabin and was a volunteer docent on the USS Midway in San Diego

He is survived by daughters Lesli Bell Goldberg, Stacy and Janet Bell; his grandchildren Bradley and Rebecca Goldberg; his siblings Rose Marie LaCheminant, Lawrence Bell and Joanne Poore as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Alan Jackman