



IN MEMORIAM

Russell R. O'Neill
Professor of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering, Emeritus
UC Los Angeles
1916 - 2007

Russell R. O'Neill (PhD '56) was professor and dean emeritus of the UCLA Henry Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science. He joined the UCLA Engineering faculty in 1946 as one of its first members and stayed with the school until his death, having served the school with distinction as a much beloved administrator, mentor, and teacher.

O'Neill's research interests were in maritime cargo handling, logistics, systems engineering and transportation. His work at UCLA led to the development of a general-purpose computer system for handling the operations of complex cargo movement and other systems. This project was one of the first to use computer simulation as a research tool, and it contributed to modernization of the cargo movement system and the adoption of standardized containers.

Russ O'Neill was appointed dean of the UCLA School of Engineering and Applied Science in 1974, and served as dean until 1983. Prior to becoming dean of the school, he served in several administrative posts, including assistant head of Engineering Extension, assistant dean for Graduate Studies, coordinator of the Engineering Executive Program and as the assistant director of the Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineering. He also served as acting dean on two occasions.

In 1975, O'Neill was elected to the National Academy of Engineering, the highest professional distinction that can be conferred upon an American engineer. O'Neill was recognized for his "contributions and leadership in the fields of engineering education, maritime cargo handling systems, and maritime transportation engineering." In 1977, he was awarded the UCLA University Service Award, which honors individuals who have significantly enriched the substance of UCLA and whose efforts have added depth and stature to the reputation of the university. In 1983, O'Neill was awarded UCLA Engineering's Alumnus of the Year Award, which honors the superior achievements of alumni who have brought honor and distinction to the school.

O'Neill retired in 1983, but remained actively involved in teaching and in the community. He was recalled to UCLA to teach the core engineering course, "Ethics and Society," which he taught until the fall of 2006. And from 1993 until 1996 he taught "The Future of Space" in an elder hostel program, taking students on field trips to Edwards Air Force Base. Since its inception in 1983, he had been an active board member of "Stone Soup," the exemplary after-school program for children.

Born in Chicago, Russ O'Neill lived in Los Angeles since childhood. He started his university education in 1934 at UCLA, then transferred to UC Berkeley to complete bachelor's and master's degrees in mechanical engineering. He started his career in the defense industry, working as a design engineer with Dow Chemical in Midland, Mich., in the early 1940s. In 1944, he returned to Los Angeles and continued work in the defense industry. A few years later, encouraged by then-Dean L.M.K. Boelter, he became a lecturer and extension studies representative at UCLA Engineering. While working full-time in these two positions, he earned his PhD in mechanical engineering at UCLA. In addition to membership in the National Academy of

Engineering, O'Neill was also a member of Sigma Xi and Tau Beta Pi honor societies, and of the American Society for Mechanical Engineers, the American Society for Engineering Education, and the American Materials Handling Society.

A celebration of Russ O'Neill's long and fruitful life was held on Tuesday, November 20, 2007, at the UCLA Faculty Center. Tributes were delivered from a range of friends and former colleagues at UCLA, in addition to presentation of a photographic retrospective slideshow set to live chamber music. A "surprise" speaker at the event was Dr. Peter Likins, the immediate former President of the University of Arizona, who attributed his introduction to academic administration to Russ O'Neill's having appointed him as UCLA engineering's assistant dean in 1974. Recounting his own eventual rise to the Deanship at Columbia University, the Presidency of Lehigh University, and later the Presidency of the University of Arizona, Likins praised O'Neill's penchant for identifying, nurturing, and encouraging promising young people, allowing them to grow into positions of leadership. This quality in Russ O'Neill was echoed with thanks by many of the day's speakers. UCLA indeed has lost one of its most thoughtful and treasured leaders.

Russell O'Neill is survived by his beloved wife, Sallie; sons, Richard and John; stepchildren, Stephanie Ballard and Ross Noden; and grandchildren Margaret O'Neill and Ryan O'Neill. At UCLA he is remembered by a host of colleagues and friends with great respect and fondness.

Ann Karagozian