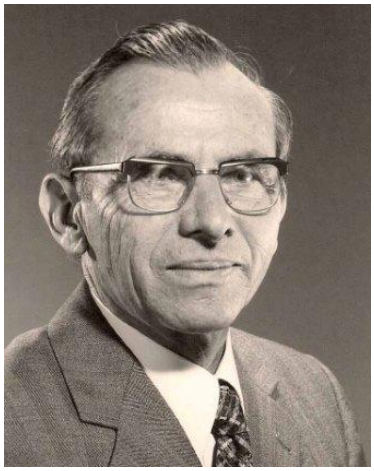

IN MEMORIAM

Erich G. Thomsen
Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Emeritus
UC Berkeley
1906 – 2010

Professor Emeritus Erich G. Thomsen died at the age of 103 on February 21, 2010, in Rossmoor, California.

Erich Thomsen was born in a suburb of Hamburg, Germany, on September 9, 1906, and after secondary schooling and machine shop training, he came to the United States in 1926. Not long thereafter, he married his life partner, Harriette, with whom he traveled the world over. They wrote research papers together on topics that combined Harriette's interest in archaeology and Erich's interest in mechanical engineering. Harriette died in 1989.

Shortly after coming to the United States, Erich decided to become an inventor. For example, having been a violinist in his early years, he invented and built a page turner for sheet music. While this device worked satisfactorily, it turned out to have no commercial future. Other inventions followed in the automotive field, but they turned out to be of little practicality or to have no commercial appeal as well. The last straw was his invention of a gas turbine. When it did not work satisfactorily, he realized that he lacked knowledge of thermodynamics. It was at this stage that he decided he needed more education and to become an engineer, with the strong support of his wife Harriette.

Erich graduated in mechanical engineering from the University of California at Berkeley, with a B.S. in 1936, M.S. in 1941, and Ph.D. in 1943. After a brief engineering career in the refrigeration and air- conditioning industry, he joined the faculty of the University of California in 1951, where he held the title of professor of mechanical engineering since 1956. He specialized in teaching and research in metal processing and published some 100 technical papers in engineering journals, as well as some 30 technical reports. He published a textbook (with Shiro Kobayashi and Charles T. Yang) entitled, Mechanics of Plastic Deformation in Metal Processing (Macmillan, New York, 1965), which was then translated and published in Russian and Japanese.

Erich was a "hands- on" professor who loved to work along with students in the laboratory on machining experiments and to assist junior faculty in their experiments. He shared his wife's love of anthropology and would often insert some historical information into technical classes, explaining, for example, how the Egyptians would have executed a process many centuries B.C.E. His students went on to fill core positions in industry as well as in major teaching institutions throughout the world.

He served as visiting professor at the Institute of Production of the Technical University, Aachen, Germany (1962), and as visiting professor and coordinator at the Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago (1965-66) of its Ford Foundation and University of California- sponsored engineering education and research program.

He also served as director for the University of California Education Abroad Center at Göttingen, Germany, for the academic year 1972-73.

After many years of service, teaching and research with the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, Erich became professor emeritus in 1973.

In 1980, Professor Thomsen was awarded the Frederick W. Taylor Research Medal Award by the Society of Manufacturing Engineers. The citation reads:

"Educator and distinguished research scientist in metal cutting and metal forming. As the originator of visioplasticity, he has provided a new and highly original method for the systematic investigation of plastic formation. Industry and other research scientists have gained immeasureably from his work and are the better for his efforts."

Also in 1980, in order to celebrate its 100th birthday, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) presented Dr. Thomsen with the Centennial Medallion of ASME in recognition of a lifetime of outstanding contributions to the engineering profession.

In 1984, the Universidad Católica de Chile conferred the doctor honoris causa degree to Dr. Thomsen. This degree was awarded to him for "his outstanding work in plasticity of metals and also for his continuous assistance and advising" to the Universidad Católica de Chile.

He celebrated his 100th birthday at a restaurant in Walnut Creek on September 9, 2006, in the company of many of his former students, colleagues and friends.

When informed of his old friend's passing, Jacques Peters of Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium (Catholic priest and prominent European manufacturing professor and researcher), recalled his long association with Dr. Thomsen:

"My sincere condolences and sympathy...I remember him when he and Joe Frisch invited me to [give the Springer] lecture in Berkeley twice (the first time Etcheverry Hall did not exist yet). As I am now cooperating with our CIRP president Gerry Byrnes for writing some historical souvenirs of CIRP (Collège International pour la Recherche en Productique), I am digging in the old Annals and found some of Erich's fundamental articles. He was a simple man but a great colleague and scientist."

Dr. Thomsen's general health remained good, though his vision and hearing did bear the effects of time. He enjoyed a manhattan and eating and socializing with old friends at his retirement home in Rossmoor. Several times a week he was able to walk to the bus stop for a trip to a nearby restaurant for breakfast.

Dr. Thomsen's ashes have been scattered in Yosemite Park, close to the ashes of his beloved wife Harriette.

David
Dornfeld
2010
Klaus Weinmann