Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison
On the Death of Professor Emeritus William F. Vogelsang

William F. Vogelsang, age 90 and a resident of Madison for nearly 60 years, died June 9, 2019. As a one of the first faculty in the original department of Nuclear Engineering at the UW-Madison, Bill was a major influence in the establishment of the UW Nuclear Reactor for research and education of nuclear engineering students as well as organizing and chairing the UW Reactor Safety Committee.

Bill was born September 12, 1928 in Lincoln, Nebraska to Fred and Lula Vogelsang. He grew up building and flying model airplanes, playing clarinet in the band, hiking in Colorado and reading. These remained his favorite activities throughout his whole life.

He graduated with a BS in physics from Nebraska Wesleyan, and an MS from Miami University of Ohio. He earned a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in 1956. Bill entered his professional life as a senior scientist, and spent seven years as part of a team at Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory in Pittsburgh working on the design and development of the first nuclear reactors used to power United States submarines and aircraft carriers.

In 1962, Bill joined the UW faculty as one of the first professors of the newly formed Nuclear Engineering program, one of the first programs in the U.S. The development of the nuclear engineering program, was initially at the Masters level, followed by the PhD level and then a Bachelors undergraduate degree. By 1963, when the UW research and training reactor was built, Bill organized and chaired the UW Reactor Safety Committee. The research focus of the faculty was nuclear reactor engineering, specifically fission. Based on their scholarly activities, the UW nuclear engineering program was immediately ranked in the top five programs in the U.S. and has remained there ever since.

Throughout his career, Bill taught the basic required reactor engineering, laboratory and design courses to undergraduates. No one else brought more nuclear engineering knowledge to the classroom than Bill. Bill’s capstone reactor design course, using reactor analysis computer software, preceded by decades this now common approach to engineering education. In his team-based course, Bill taught students not just engineering, but how to be engineers. He insisted on professional behavior and taking responsibility for design decisions and project completion. He was critical but fair. During the years 1990-1997, Bill served as the editor of the American Nuclear Society’s international research journal “Nuclear Technology”.

Bill was one of the Nuclear Engineering faculty that saw the promise of plasma physics and nuclear fusion as emerging research areas. In the 1970s he expanded his research interests into fusion technology. Bill was universally considered a valued member of his department by his colleagues.

Barbara survives with their children, Margaret Sanders (Robert) and Tom (Kathy Moran); grandchildren Louisa Buck (Geoff), Billy Sanders (Martina), Adrienne Vogelsang; and great-granddaughter Josefina Fabian Sanders.