Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison
On the Death of Professor Emeritus Peter L. Eichman

Dr. Peter L. Eichman, Professor Emeritus of Neurology died on January 7, 2021 at age 95, in Green Valley, AZ. He was one of the most influential neurologists in the state of Wisconsin in the second part of the 20th century and was the youngest Dean of Medical School in the University’s history.

Dr. Peter Eichman was a native of Pennsylvania, born in Philadelphia on November 18, 1925. He received his B.S degree from St. Joseph’s College in 1945 and M.D. degree from the Jefferson Medical College in 1949.

He did his internship at Fitzgerald-Mercy Hospital, Lansdowne, Pennsylvania (1949-1950) His residency and fellowship training included: Walter Reed Hospital (Hepatic and Metabolic Diseases,1950-1951); Jefferson Medical College (Infectious diseases, 1951-1952); Mayo Clinic Medicine and Neurology, 1952-1954) and University of Wisconsin Hospital (Neuropsychiatry, 1954-1955).

After completion of his residency he was Instructor in the Department of Neuropsychiatry at UW Medical School (1955-1957) and in 1957 was appointed Assistant Professor of Neurology. In 1962 he was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor of Neurology and Medicine, and in 1965 to the rank of Professor of Medicine and Neurology.

Early in his career he distinguished himself for his outstanding administrative and leadership skills. In 1962 he was named the UW Student Health Service Director and shortly later, in 1964, he was appointed Chief of Staff of the University Hospital. Dr. Eichman was Dean of UW Medical School between 1965-1971. He was appointed Dean at the very young age of 39, with a reputation as an effective leader with superb communication skills and a keen sense of organizational stewardship. His commitment to working for the University continued throughout his long career, including service on the University Committee from 1982-1985, which he chaired during the 1984-1985 school year.

His major accomplishments included his relentless advocacy and work with state authorities to expand our medical center and build the west medical campus. He presented to the legislature a strong case that there was a dramatic shortage of physicians in the state. He fought for the support of the governor and politicians in the state, advocating for expeditious expansion of the medical center on the west campus site in the interest of the people of Wisconsin. The construction of the new Clinical Science Center and the UW Hospital started in 1973.

Dr. Eichman was an expert clinical neurologist and educator, with superb bedside manner. He was a magnificent teacher and mentor to medical students, residents, and fellows. His subspecialty interest was in Neuromuscular Diseases and Electrodiagnostic Medicine and for many years he directed the Electromyography Laboratory at the UW Hospital. He was a member of many professional societies, including American Academy of Neurology, American College of Physicians, American Medical Association, American Society of Clinical Neurologists and American Association for the Advancement of Science.
In 1972 the University of Wisconsin granted leave to Dr. Eichman to serve as Deputy Director of the Federal Bureau of Health Manpower Education. The Bureau’s main mission was increasing the nation’s health manpower pool. Throughout his life he was a strong advocate for individuals with disabilities, perhaps influenced by his own experience of childhood polio. In 1967 he joined the Governor’s Committee on Employment of the Handicapped. He was a very active participant in Rotary International's campaign to eradicate polio worldwide.

He was a most dedicated, respectful doctor, beloved by his patients and their families. He was an inspirational role model for several generations of students, physicians in training and younger colleagues. He had a most gentle, calm demeanor. His kindness, generosity and his ever-present warm smile will always be missed by all of us.

He is survived by his wife Phyllis (née Kettelhon) whom he married in 1955 and five children, nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Memorial Committee
Andrew J. Waclawik, M.D.
Thomas P. Sutula, M.D., PhD.
John Fleming, M.D.