

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

FREDERICK EMMONS TERMAN (1900 – 1982)

Frederick Emmons Terman, Provost Emeritus of Stanford University, died in his sleep at his campus home on December 19, 1982. A memorial service was held on January 4, 1983 at the Stanford Memorial Church. He is survived by three sons, Frederick, Terence, and Lewis, and by five grandchildren. His wife of 47 years, the former Sibyl Walcutt, died in 1975.

Fred Terman was born in English, Indiana, on June 7, 1900. He was the son of Professor Lewis M. Terman, the psychologist who developed the Stanford-Binet intelligence quotient after moving to Stanford in 1910.

Fred grew up on the campus and acquired an early interest in radio. He obtained a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering in 1920, following this with the engineer's degree in electrical engineering two years later, under Professor Harris J. Ryan. He received his doctorate at MIT in 1924 under Professor Vannevar Bush. He then contracted a severe case of tuberculosis which required nearly a year's convalescence. In spite of this handicap, he was able to undertake part-time teaching at Stanford, and to begin the first of a series of textbooks on radio engineering. The success of these volumes enhanced Stanford's reputation in engineering on a nationwide basis. He became an assistant professor in 1927 and in recognition of his teaching and writing ability was made full professor and head of the department in 1937. His reputation was such that in 1941 he was named president of the Institute of Radio Engineers - the first person so chosen who lived farther from New York City than Rochester.

Always keenly interested in and dedicated to the University, his Stanford career was interrupted only during the Second World War when he was called upon to organize an 800-person government laboratory at Harvard University whose purpose was to develop anti-radar devices. As a result of his wartime responsibilities, Terman became part of a relatively small group of individuals who exerted great influence on U.S. science policy for the postwar period.

In 1946 he returned to Stanford as Dean of Engineering and began the program of faculty selection and organizational innovation that brought the Stanford School of Engineering to the forefront among American universities. He did this by recognizing that in the postwar period there were opportunities to obtain government support for basic research and graduate study in the universities without compromising their traditional independence. In addition, he perceived that an organized interaction with local high technology industry could provide not only financial assistance but intellectual support and stimulation as well for both faculty and students. Terman was extraordinarily successful in creating what he called "a community of scholars."

Terman became Provost in 1955, and from 1959 served in addition as Vice President of the University until his retirement in 1965. During that period he devoted his full energies to developing the University as a whole. It was widely agreed that he and President J. E. Wallace Sterling constituted a remarkably effective team. Particularly evident during this interval was Terman's ability – characteristic of his entire career – to think constructively about the future, and to act accordingly.

Terman achieved during his lifetime a truly international reputation. He received five honorary degrees and was decorated by three governments. He held the highest U.S. civilian awards: the Presidential Medal for Merit, and the National Medal of Science.

Fred Terman was a giant in vision, innovation, and achievement, but he never lost his humility. He was always available to junior faculty, graduate students, and former students. His wisdom and clear reasoning influenced the personal and professional lives of an extraordinary number of people, and as David Packard has said, "He was responsible more than any other single person for the position of excellence Stanford now enjoys."

Oswald G. Villard, Jr., Chair
William R. Rambo
Ralph J. Smith