

In Memoriam: Georg Ernest Otto Widera (1938–2022)



Otto Widera

Otto Widera passed away on Feb. 11, 2022. Otto, well-known by his friends with that name, was born on Feb. 16, 1938, in Dortmund, Germany. The Widera family sailed to the U.S. on the Queen Mary in 1950, when his father was hired as the chief engineer at the Ladish Co., Cudahy, WI.

Otto attended the Stadt Gymnasium in Dortmund, Germany, and Don Bosco High School in Milwaukee, WI. He attended the University of Wisconsin where he received his B.S. and M.S. Eng degrees (1956–1962) and Ph.D. in Engineering Mechanics (1962–1965). He joined the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) in 1965, and in 1981 Otto became Founding Head of the Mechanical Engineering Department (formerly Energy Engineering) from 1983 to 1991. He served in a number of capacities until he retired in 1991 from UIC. He then joined Marquette University in 1991. At Marquette, as Chair of the Mechanical and Industrial Engineering Department, he headed an interdisciplinary group offering two ABET-accredited undergraduate programs as well as three graduate programs. He served as Senior Associate Dean of the College from 1999 to 2007 and as Interim Dean from 1998 to 1999 and in 2003. He also served as Director of the Discovery Learning Center, as Co-Developer and Co-Director of the Engineering Management M.S. Program (joint with the College of Business Administration), and as Co-Director of the Center for Joining and Manufacturing Assembly. Otto advised 27 Master's Students and 22 Ph.D. students. Otto retired in May 2014 from Marquette University after more than 30 years of service, with the title of Professor Emeritus of Mechanical Engineering.

Otto is a Mechanical Engineer, Educator, and consultant. His research interest included mechanics of composite materials, plate and shell structures, stress analysis, pressure vessels, mechanics of deformation processing with the publication of more than 200 technical papers.

Otto was very active and well known in many engineering communities. He was a Member and Chair of WARM- Wisconsin Association of Research Management in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from January 1996 to January 2010. He was recognized as a

Fellow of the Standard Oil Corporation, CA, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, University of Stuttgart, the Federal Republic of Germany where he was a research Fellow from 1968 to 1969. Otto also served as an external Ph.D. Examiner in Canada, India, and Bahrain.

Otto provided outstanding service to engineering societies including ASTM, PVRC, ICPVT, ASME, and PVP. He was an ASME Member since 1970 and became an ASME Life Fellow in 1984. He served in ASME in various capacities as listed below and received ASME Dedicated Service Award in 2009.

- Elected VP-Materials & Structures Group, 1993–1996.
- Council of Engineering, 1993–1996.
- Board of Editors, 1982–1993.
- Materials & Structures Group Board, M&S, 1990–1997.
- Chair, M&S, 1993–1996.

Otto was very active in the PVP Division by serving in many different roles as listed below:

- Chair: Design & Analysis Committee, 1980–1983.
- Member: C/S, Pressure Technology Group, 1988–1994.
- PVP Journal Editor, 1982–1993, and 2006–2012.
- Conference Chair: Chicago Conference, 1986.
- ICPVT8, Montreal, Conference Chair, 1996.
- Division Chair, 1990–1991.
- Senate Chair 1991.

Because of his outstanding service, the Literature Award of JPVT was named in his honor. Otto received PVP Medalist in 1995.

When asked how he would like to be remembered, Otto said he would like to be remembered as “a loving and caring husband, father, Opa and friend; a dedicated professor and engineering administrator for 49 years; an honored member of various engineering societies; a mild-mannered man who loved to read and enjoyed classical music, nature and traveling.” Yes, this is the wish of my departing dear friend and colleague. So long until we meet again in Heaven.

Sam Y. Zamrik
Past Editor of JPVT

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