



Dr. Alan G. Merten

December 27, 1941 - May 21, 2020

Dr. Alan G. Merten, Ph.D., 78, of Bonita Springs, passed away on May 21, 2020 surrounded by his loving family. He was the devoted husband of Sarah “Sally” L. Merten (née Otto).

Dr. Merten was born on December 27, 1941 in Milwaukee, WI, to the late Gilbert E. and Ruth A. (née Ristow) Merten. He grew up in West Allis, WI, graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran High School in 1959 and continuing his education at the University of Wisconsin (both in Milwaukee and Madison) where he earned a Bachelor’s in Mathematics in 1963. During his undergraduate years he was enrolled in the U.S. Air Force ROTC program, including service as cadet corps commander, and upon graduation was commissioned as an officer. He attended Stanford University as an Air Force officer and received a Master’s in Computer Science in 1964. He was assigned to the Pentagon in Washington D.C., earning the Air Force Commendation Medal, and as a secondary duty served as a White House Social Aide for President Lyndon B. Johnson. He often regaled his family with White House stories, including spending time with the Rolling Stones, having drinks with Kirk Douglas, and dancing with Princess Margaret. It was during this period that he met his wife, Sally, an Air Force nurse. They were married in January of 1967 in Alexandria, VA and both completed their military service in August of that year. It was at that time that they moved to Madison, WI so he could pursue his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin, which he completed

in May of 1970.

He began his career as an educator in 1970 at the University of Michigan as an Assistant Professor in the College of Engineering, and eventually moved to the Business School. In 1983, Alan was appointed to the newly created position of Associate Dean for Executive Education and Computing Services. Under his leadership he put in place the building blocks that would firmly enhance Michigan's reputation in Executive Education and lead to this program being ranked number one in the country. In July 1986 he became the Dean of the College of Business Administration at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and in 1989 became Dean of the Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. While at Cornell he spearheaded the increase in diversity of the student body, encouraged more engagement between the school and the business community, and initiated the school's move to Sage Hall. After seven years at Cornell, in 1996 he was named the President of George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, which he led for 16 years, retiring in 2012. His contributions to George Mason brought unprecedented growth to the institution as well as national recognition and prominence, particularly during the men's basketball's team participation in the 2006 NCAA Final Four. Since his passing there has been an outpouring of support from the GMU community acknowledging his legacy that will undoubtedly be felt for many generations to come.

Some of his happiest times with his family were spent on international adventures, many of which were connected to two sabbaticals they took in Budapest, Hungary and Fontainebleau, France. He also travelled to a host of other countries related to his professional responsibilities including Japan, China, Syria, UAE, Egypt, and India. Dr. Merten and his wife, Sally, first bought property in Southwest Florida in 2010 and made Florida their permanent home in 2015. He enjoyed long walks and bike rides, discussing politics and current events with friends, and visits from his four cherished

grandsons to fish in Estero Bay, swim in the pool, play mini-golf at Congo River, and eat ice cream at Royal Scoop.

Dr. Merten is survived by his beloved wife of 53 years, Sarah "Sally" L. Merten (née Otto) and their children; Eric Merten of VA, Melissa Belleville (née Merten) and husband Bill of NY. Grandfather to Ryan Merten, Adam Merten, Will Belleville, and Wyatt Belleville. Brother to James Merten and wife Barbara of MN, Jane Thompson (née Merten) and husband Walt of VA. He also leaves behind many nieces, nephews, countless friends, professional colleagues, and former students all over the country and the world.

Due to current events, services for Dr. Merten will be held at a future date and at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers and in his memory, the family requests that donations be made to the Dr. Alan G. Merten Memorial Fund to support endowments at the George Mason University Foundation, 4400 University Drive, MS 1A3, Fairfax, VA 22030. Checks should be made payable to GMUF or can be made online at giving.gmu.edu.

Arrangements are being handled by Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home Family Owned and Operated since 1978.

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Alan G. Merten*

October 09, 2023 at 03:40 AM



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