

## **Memorial Resolution for Richard Neil Farmer**

**By John Lombardi, Paul Marer, and William Ryan**

Richard Neil (Dick) Farmer died at home in Bloomington, Indiana on February 28, 1987. Although ill for nearly a year, Dick continued to work until the end. Indeed, he was looking forward to the September publication of his 200th article, "Would You Want Your Granddaughter To Marry A Taiwanese Marketing Man?" in the Journal of Marketing.

Dick's impact on Indiana University and upon the field of International Business will endure. During the past 25 years he had earned a reputation as among the handful of the most original, influential, and prolific writers in his field. Beyond his iconoclasms and his humor-- which made him anything but a conventional scholar and writer--lay profound and original insights and concepts.

Richard Farmer was born in California on August 19, 1928, the son of George Albert and Alice Elizabeth (Mellin) Farmer. He attended elementary and high schools in San Leandro, California, then enrolled in the University of California-Berkeley, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1950 and his master's in 1951. Following two years in the Army, where he earned the rank of sergeant, he returned to Berkeley and received his Ph.D. in 1957.

He then went international, teaching business at the American University at Beirut from 1957 until 1959. Desiring to learn more about the international aspects of business, he accepted a position as General Manager of a large contracting company based in Saudi Arabia. Dick profited greatly from his four years in the Middle East, where he acquired not only friends but also knowledge and insights, which became the foundation of his mastery of his field.

After returning to the United States, he taught at the University of California (Davis) and then at UCLA. At UCLA he made the acquaintance of Barry Richman. He and Barry co-authored Comparative Management and Economic Progress, which became one of the most influential books in that field. Dick came to Indiana University in 1964 as Associate Professor of International Business. He was promoted to Professor and Chairman of the Department of International Business in September 1967. Dick served as chairman until August 1981, with time out in the spring semester of 1976 to be a Visiting Distinguished Professor of International Business at San Francisco State University.

Although he received many academic honors, there were three that he prized most: his election as Fellow of the Academy of International Management; the Indiana University President's Award for Excellence in Teaching; and the George Washington Honor Medal for excellence in business education, awarded by the Freedoms Foundation, Valley Forge.

His written output was staggering: 30 books, 200 articles published in all of the major journals of business, and many more in the popular press. As a teacher he was equally impressive. An inspired mentor of doctoral candidates, he had a lasting influence on the 50 persons who earned a doctorate under his supervision. This worldwide group, known as "Farmer's Crop," fills more

prestigious positions in International Business than do the graduates of any other business school. The Academy of International Business recognized and rewarded his work with advanced students and in November 1986 established an award in his name for the outstanding dissertation in International Business.

While a listing of his academic achievements is impressive, it fails to give the essence of the sparkling eruptions of thoughts and ideas which cascaded from the volcano we knew as Dick Farmer. A few illustrate his prodigious originality:

His passion was automobiles. Not for him the show-room glitter of Detroit; instead he loved to regenerate old, worn-out, discarded "junkers." This passion led to his intimate acquaintance with junkyards. There his keen mind and powers of observation led him to conclude that an inspection of a society's refuse was a better barometer of its values and level of development than any dull set of statistics. The result was one of his books, *Farmer's Law: Junk in a World of Affluence*.

Ever practical, Dick put his conclusions and observations to the test. He became an entrepreneur and co-founder of Farmer's Garage. It was, as he said, a place where academics worked on real problems, i.e., the restoration of decrepit automobiles to Dick's standards of mechanical health. Naturally the garage resembled a junkyard. Since Dick couldn't let the customers see it, ailing cars were picked up and delivered.

Dick recognized that while the practice of business is vital and lively, teaching about business is usually dull. He breathed life into his favorite course, *Introduction to Business*, by writing a novel to serve as its text. To climax the course, on final exam day students were treated to a musical comedy! The words were written by Dick; the music was composed by his beloved wife Jean.

Dick was unique. We will miss him and his off-beat, thought-provoking, highly original ideas. We treasure our memories of him.

Dick Farmer is survived by his wife (and frequent co-author) Jean; his daughters, Christine and Sarah; his sons, Geoffrey and Daniel; his granddaughter Triona; his brother David; and his father George.

In recognition of Professor Farmer's service to Indiana University and to his profession, be it resolved that his memorial resolution become a part of the minutes of the Bloomington Faculty Council and that copies be sent to his family.

Commemorated by the Bloomington Faculty Council: October 20, 1987