



Thomas S. Martin Jr.

THOMAS L. MARTIN, JR.

1921–2009

Elected in 1971

*“For creative application of modern communications technology
to advance engineering education.”*

BY JOHN L. ANDERSON

TOM MARTIN died on October 8, 2009, in Irving, Texas. He retired after serving as president of Illinois Institute of Technology between 1974 and 1987. Other academic leadership experiences included Dean of Engineering at the University of Arizona, University of Florida and Southern Methodist University. He received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. During World War II he served in the Army, rising to the rank of captain and was awarded a Bronze Star. After the war he attended Stanford University where he received his Ph.D. He received honorary doctorates from RPI and SMU. He was a Fellow of IEEE and an honoree in the Hall of Fame of ASEE. He was a member of the 1970 commission sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that was chaired by Frederick E. Terman and recommended the establishment of the Korean Advanced Institute for Science (now KAIST). He is survived by his second wife Millie, two brothers, two children, and two grandchildren.

Dr. Martin was a pioneer in distance education and saw its potential in both primary and continuing (professional) education. At Illinois Institute of Technology he garnered financial support from corporations such as Motorola and A. Finkl & Sons to develop real-time video courses. He created IITV as a microwave-based distance education TV network that allowed students at remote locations to participate in live classroom discussion. IIT courses were delivered to many remote locations throughout the Midwest. Under his leadership, IIT became the first university to join the National Technology University. Today his vision of distance education is realized by online transmission using the Internet.

His passion and commitment were directed to the diversification of engineering and science education as it related to gender, race, and ethnicity. He correctly appreciated the changing demographics of the United States and the need to incorporate underrepresented minorities in the technical fields. In his first year as president of IIT, he partnered with his newly appointed admissions director, Nate Thomas, to develop a strategy to increase the undergraduate enrollment of underrepresented groups. The result was extraordinary—the enrollment of minorities rose to become 21 percent of the undergraduate student body, the enrollment of women increased by 150 percent, and the first woman received a varsity athletic letter during his presidency. He was an early advocate for the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME).

Other notable achievements during his tenure as president of IIT include growth of the undergraduate student body by 40 percent, development of a strong ROTC program in the three major military branches, and programs to achieve efficient waste and energy management on the campus. He sought to “green” the university campus decades before the term became fashionable.

Martin's multidimensionality is evidenced by his authorship of eight books including the textbooks *Ultrahigh Frequency Engineering* (Prentice-Hall) and *Electronic Circuits* (Prentice-Hall), and the fiction book *Malice in Blunderland* (McGraw-Hill), which satirizes the ineptitude of many non-profit institutions.

Tom Martin was a visionary. He appreciated very early the potential role of communications technology in education and the need to reach out to all elements of our society in order to create the innovative people that advance society. He was an academic leader without pretense and continually questioned the *status quo*. Today's leaders of the engineering profession, corporate and academic, are indebted to him.