



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "R. P. Gifford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".

# Richard Pitman Gifford

## 1922-1976

By William L. Everitt

Richard Pitman Gifford, Vice-President for Communications Projects of the General Electric Company at Lynchburg, Virginia, was born on February 9, 1922, and died on August 27, 1976, in Santa Maria, Switzerland, of a heart attack, while climbing on his vacation. An ardent outdoor enthusiast, he favored skiing and tennis and never slowed down at work or at play. An individual of broad interests, he served the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) as a valuable member of its Telecommunication Committee even before his election to NAE in 1973. For the NAE and NRC (National Research Council), he was also a member of the Panel on the Status of Telecommunication Research in the United States, 1972, was Chairman of the Urban Information Systems Inter-Agency Support Panel, 1974, and a member of the Metropolitan Communication Systems Study.

Always able to analyze any problem succinctly, Dick Gifford was turned to again and again by his colleagues to summarize the issues under discussion, guide them to significant conclusions, and organize important sections of reports. In 1968, as Chairman of the Joint Technical Advisory Council of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and the Electronic Industries Association (EIA), he organized the study leading to the publication of *Spectrum Engineering-The Key to Progress*. His leadership recruited more than two hundred engineers from industry, government, and education who donated some forty man-years of work to the task.

Many consider this the most significant study ever completed in this area, and a unique marshalling of professional volunteer workers.

Graduating *cum laude* from Harvard University in 1943 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics, he entered the U.S. Navy, taught at Harvard, and, after further study at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Bell Laboratories, served as a radar officer in the evaluation of fire-control systems.

Upon release from the Navy, Dick Gifford joined General Electric in 1946. There he assisted in the establishment of the first microwave television relay from New York City to Schenectady. Later he was involved in development and design work for two-way mobile radio equipment at Electronics Park, Syracuse, and was rapidly recognized as a leading expert in that field.

He moved to Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1958 as Manager-Engineering of the Communications Products Department. In 1963 he became General Manager of that department. In 1969 he became General Manager of the entire division, which is composed of three departments—the Mobile Radio Products Department, in Lynchburg, the Telecommunications Products Department, also in Lynchburg, and the Data Communications Products Department, located in Waynesboro.

He was made a Fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers in 1964 "for leadership in communication techniques and practice." He also served as a member of the Frequency Managerial Advisory Council of the Office of Telecommunications Policy.

Dick Gifford balanced his broad interest in business with concern and involvement in education and many other phases of community life. He was a "Christian Gentleman" in the very best sense of that concept, a man who demonstrated his deep religious convictions by a life of service to his fellow man. An elder in the Presbyterian Church, he was also a Sunday School Adult Class teacher, President of the Board of Lynchburg College, and from 1960 to 1972 served on the Lynchburg School Board. In 1971 he was awarded the Brotherhood Citation of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and in 1973 he was appointed to the

Virginia State Board of Education. He was also Chairman of the Lynchburg Museum System Board.

To quote a local editor, "he was one of those rare men who give a large portion of their lives to serving their fellow man. In this, he measured up to the highest traditions of Virginia, traditionally established by those souls who eschewed their lives of ease to serve their community, state and nation because they considered it their highest duty. Richard Gifford was one of those men of whom it can truly be said that they improved the whole of human existence by the manner of their living."

Dick Gifford demonstrated that he believed engineering is a profession "for the benefit of mankind," and acted on that belief.