THOMAS J. MURRIN
1929–2012
Elected in 1984
“For his innovative and far-sighted contributions to both industry and government in the fields of productivity and quality improvement.”

BY ANGEL JORDAN

THOMAS JOSEPH MURRIN, a native of New York City, was born on April 30, 1929, and died on January 30, 2012. Married to Marie “Dee” (Coyne) Murrin, deceased on September 11, 2013, he is survived by Kathleen Murrin, Jeanne Wilkinson (Jack), Mary Murrin Lamp, Cecilia Minnock (Patrick), Theresa Murrin, Heidi Murrin (Jeff Miller), Thomas J.C. Murrin (Karen), and Claire Murrin Hudac (Mark); grandchildren Colleen, Carolyn, Patrick, Thomas, Paul, Liam, Ian, Madilyn, Catherine, Sean, Darrah, and Aidan; and great-grandchildren Luke, Adelle, and Declan.

Murrin received a bachelor of science degree in physics from Fordham University in 1951 where he was a starting tackle under Coach Vince Lombardi; he did graduate work at several universities.

Recruited to the Westinghouse Electric Corporation as a graduate student in 1951, Murrin initially worked as a manufacturing/materials engineer. Over the next 36 years, he served in various positions with Westinghouse, including European manufacturing representative based in Geneva, Switzerland; corporate vice president of manufacturing; senior vice president of the Defense and Public Systems Group; and president of the Public Systems Company. He retired in 1987 as president of the firm’s highly regarded Energy and Advanced
Technology Group—an organization with nearly $5 billion in annual sales. As a member of the Westinghouse Management Committee from 1974 until his retirement, quality and productivity improvement were elevated to key corporate initiatives under his guidance. During his Westinghouse career, he traveled to more than 40 countries.

Building on his extensive foreign travel and study of industrial operations, Murrin served as a US delegate to the NATO Industrial Advisory Group, headquartered in Brussels. He was a member of the Defense Policy Advisory Committee on Trade (DPACT) of the Department of Defense and served as chairman of DPACT’s Subcommittee on Trade Relations with Japan.

He was the first chairman of two prestigious advisory committees to the federal government, the board of overseers of the Commerce Department’s Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the Defense Department’s Defense Manufacturing Board. He was a member of the President’s Commission on Industrial Competitiveness, and chairman of the board of governors of the Aerospace Industries Association.

Murrin served for 18 months as deputy secretary of the US Department of Commerce, nominated by President George H.W. Bush and confirmed by the US Senate. At the Department of Commerce, he was deeply involved in a variety of executive activities, including the 1990 Decennial Census, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and its initial application in the Commerce Department, the modernization of the National Weather Service, and the new Advanced Technology and Manufacturing Center Programs. As acting secretary for Secretary Mosbacher, Murrin attended cabinet and other top-level meetings with President Bush, Vice President Quayle, and other senior federal government executives.

Thomas J. Murrin was named dean of Duquesne University’s A.J. Palumbo School of Business Administration, effective January 1991. At Duquesne’s Business School, he helped to develop innovative programs to distinguish its teaching and research—particularly in the increasingly important field of global competitiveness and economic growth. In 1993
and 1994, faculty-industry study trips were made to Japan and Germany, and in 1995 to Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic.

During his earlier involvement with educational institutions, Murrin was Distinguished Service Professor of Technology and Management at Carnegie Mellon University, chairman of the board of trustees of Duquesne University, and a member of the board of trustees of Fordham University and national board of Cities in Schools. Together with Raj Reddy and the author of this tribute, he founded and supported in 1979 the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, now regarded as one of the largest and most prestigious institutes of its kind in the world.

After returning to Pittsburgh, he continued to promote quality and competitiveness initiatives as a member of the executive committee of the DC-based Council on Competitiveness and as a board member of several organizations, including Motorola and the Duquesne Light Company. Tom became a nationally recognized proponent of total quality management in academe, with numerous invited presentations across the country.

As part of Murrin’s community service activities in Pittsburgh, he led a successful fundraising effort at Mercy Hospital, where he was chairman of the board for nine years, and participated in similar efforts for Duquesne University and United Way. He was the honorary chairman of several successful fundraising drives and cochaired the Cities in Schools fundraising effort.

Among Murrin’s honors are the Order of Merit, Westinghouse Electric Corporation; the Annual Achievement Award in Business and the Encaenia Award, Fordham University; the National Leadership Award, American Productivity Center; the James Forrestal Memorial Award and Excellence in Manufacturing Award, National Security Industrial Association; election to the National Academy of Engineering; the Manufacturing Management Award, Society of Manufacturing Engineers; Hall of Fame, Cardinal Hayes High School; honorary doctor of management science,
Duquesne University; appointment as a fellow of the World Academy of Productivity Science; the 1994 Pittsburgh Man of the Year Award in Education; and, in 1995, an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Fordham University.