

Faculty legend Grant Gale dies

Grant O. Gale, 94, physics teacher and faculty leader at Grinnell College for nearly 70 years, died of coronary artery disease Tuesday, April 14, at Grinnell Regional Medical Center.

Services are pending.

Prof. Gale taught physics to hundreds of Grinnell students, beginning in 1928, and was with the college for well over one-third of its existence. He was an innovative teacher who was devoted to his students, interim President Charles L.

Duke recalled.

"He made the classroom exciting. He became a mentor for many students, and they often were like members of his family. He remained in regular contact with his students after they graduated. He always put his students first," Duke said.

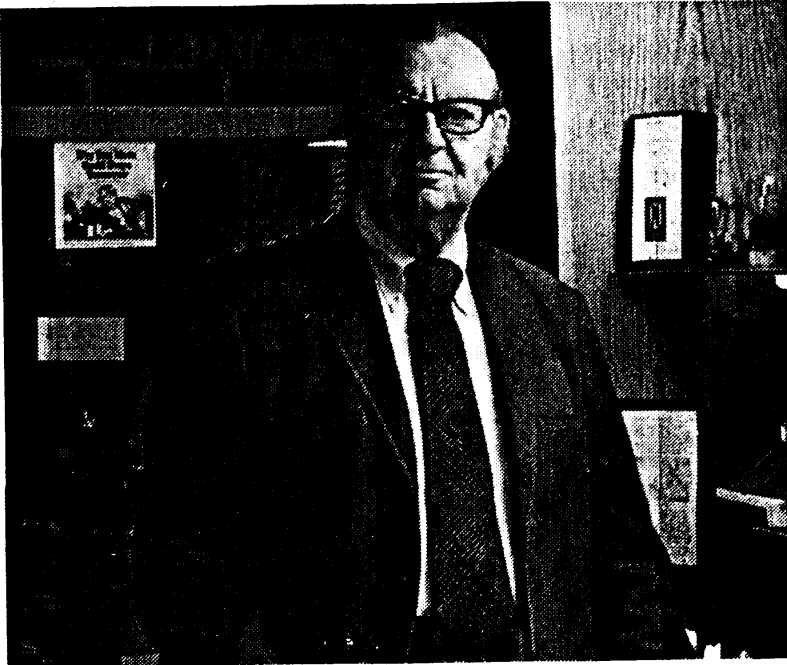
William Case, professor of physics at Grinnell, called Gale "very much a model teacher."

Model to younger faculty

"He was a role model to a lot of younger faculty, including me, an example for the way we should interact with and care for students," Case said. "He could remember students from all his teaching days, and many of his former students came back to visit him."

Prof. Gale taught physics to many of Grinnell's famous alumni, including musician Herbie Hancock, physicist George Simon, former Sony Corporation of America president and CEO Michael Schulhof and the late Robert N. Noyce, the co-inventor of the integrated circuit.

In 1948, Prof. Gale used his connections at Bell Telephone Laboratories to obtain one of two original transistors to use in his classes.



Grant O. Gale, who died Tuesday at the age of 94, began his career at Grinnell College nearly 70 years ago.

GRANT O. GALE —

Continued on page 5

Grinnell Herald-Register April 16, 1998

Grant O. Gale

A memorial service for Grant O. Gale, Grinnell College professor emeritus of physics who died April 14, will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, May 16, at the United Church of Christ — Congregational.

A memorial fund has been established at Grinnell College.

Prof. Gale's friends are being encouraged to send written remembrances to the Grinnell College President's Office so that they may be shared with the family.

The remembrances should be sent to Grinnell College, Office of the President, P.O. Box 805, Grinnell 50112, or sent via E-mail to:

gale@ac.grin.edu

17-18 APR 1998

Grant O. Gale —

Continued from page 1

Noyce credited Gale with being the individual who made the difference in his career and life.

"My proudest achievements are the physics majors we've turned out at Grinnell," Gale said in a 1994 article in the Grinnell Magazine. "Noyce has gotten his fair share of attention, but there have been others who have done well, too. I'm proud of them as well."

Chaired faculty

Prof. Gale also chaired the faculty for several terms and helped gain the privilege of academic leave.

"For many of the years I was here, Grant was chair of the faculty. He had the total respect of the faculty as a person with integrity. When he spoke at a meeting, the faculty listened," said Joseph F. Wall in the 1994 Grinnell Magazine article. Wall was professor emeritus of history and a 1941 graduate of Grinnell. He died in 1996.

Grant Gale was born Dec. 29, 1903, in Prentice, Wis. He graduated from high school in Eau Claire, Mich., and earned his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Wisconsin in 1926 and his master's degree in physics from the University of Michigan in 1933. He was married to Harriet Millar in 1929. She died in 1977. They had three children, Harriet Gale Mason, a 1956 graduate of Grinnell College; Hannah Gale Pinkerton; and Charles Gale.

Gale began teaching at Grinnell College in 1928 as an instructor. He was named assistant professor in 1933, associate professor in 1938, professor in 1942 and S.S. Williston professor of physics in 1961. He retired from classroom teaching in 1972.

Research contacts

During his career as a physicist, he received two Fulbright fellowships and had research contacts with the Office of Naval Research and the Research Corporation.

He continued to serve the college as curator of the Grinnell Physics Historical Museum from 1972 until the time of his death.

"I think it's the only working physics museum at a college," Duke said. "We've used that equipment in lectures. A lot of the pieces come out of the cabinet and onto the lecture table for demonstrations even today."

Gale will be remembered for many years as the faculty member who always attended the first faculty meeting of every school year, opening the meetings with an amusing historical anecdote. His name will be invoked every time anyone talks about the college's observatory, named the Grant O. Gale Observatory in May 1984.

In 1991, he achieved one of his dreams when the Alpha and Omega Sundial named for his wife, Harriet, was installed near the Bowen Hall of Science and the Noyce Science Center.

During the college's Sesquicentennial celebration in 1995-96, Gale was the honorary chairman of the fund-raising effort to renovate Goodnow Hall, the oldest building on the college's campus, which housed the physics department during Gale's career.

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