



HOUSTON -- John J. Bertin, died October 11, 2008 of pancreatic cancer.

Born October 13, 1938 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Andrew and Yolanda Pasquale Bertin, he spent his formative years in Houston, Texas, graduating from Stephen F. Austin High and entering Rice Institute in 1956. He went on to earn three degrees from Rice: a Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and Doctor of Philosophy in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. After earning his Master's degree, he worked on the Gemini and Apollo programs at newly formed NASA, beginning a close working relationship with the agency that would continue throughout his life.

Upon completing his PhD at Rice University, he accepted a faculty position at the University of Texas at Austin and worked almost two decades there, teaching enthusiastically to students and engaging in research, including projects related to the space shuttle program. He was rewarded by receiving the Bettie Margaret Smith chaired professorship. One of his proudest achievements was in being recognized with an Excellence in Teaching Award for the 1978-9 Academic Year, an honor voted on by engineering students. In addition to his academic pursuits he helped raise a family in Central Texas and was an active parent, whether coaching little league teams, hiking with his family to the creek, or taking his children to watch college football games.

He worked a number of years at Sandia National Labs in Albuquerque, NM, before returning to teaching, accepting an appointment at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado. He was awarded the Exemplary Civilian Service Award in 1996, and in 2004 was named professor emeritus there in addition to receiving the Outstanding Civilian Service Award. One of the greatest honors he received during this time was to be included as an aerothermodynamic consultant on the Space Shuttle Columbia Accident Investigation Board.

He continued to maintain an active professional life after retiring to Houston, consulting for various NASA projects, and teaching as an adjunct faculty at his alma mater, Rice University. He was recognized by Rice for his noteworthy career achievements when he was selected for a Distinguished Alumni award in 2005.

Throughout his career, he wrote or co-authored a number of text books in the field of

aerodynamics and fluid mechanics, and was a leading authority in the field of hypersonics and aerothermodynamics. As an educator, he was dedicated to the continued development of his students' professional lives, and maintained life long relationships with many of the people he taught. He was not only a teacher, but a friend and companion.

His professional dedication was matched by his devotion to Rice sports teams, and he would follow the exploits of the Owls throughout his life, often traveling long distances to take in a game with one or more of his children or fellow alumni. He was a truly hard worker, an indomitable optimist, and known for his lively and mischievous sense of humor.

He is survived by his four children, Thomas, Randolph, Elizabeth, and Michael Bertin; four grandchildren, Audrey and Andrew Bertin, and Emma and Honore Nelson; and two sisters Gloria Langley and Rosemary Rosensprung. He was preceded in death by his wife Ruth.

Special thanks is due to the wonderful and caring staff at Houston Hospice who provided outstanding care during John Bertin's final weeks.

A Service is planned for 20 October at 1 pm at St. Michael's Catholic Church, 1801 Sage Rd, Houston, Texas.

In lieu of sending flowers, a memorial gift may be made to Rice Athletic Fund:

Rice University
Office of Athletic Development
Rice Athletics Fund--MS 546
PO Box 1892
Houston, TX 77251-1892

or Houston Hospice.