

DICK BALZHISER OF MICHIGAN

This feature article was contributed by Professor Stuart Churchill, University of Pennsylvania and former chairman at the University of Michigan.

The students and faculty of the Department of Chemical and Metallurgical Engineering of the University of Michigan have a proud tradition of active participation in athletics. Many students, and usually superior ones, have won recognition in formal intercollegiate competition. Bob Bird recently stated in CEE that the faculty of Chemical Engineering Department at the University of Wisconsin confines its athletic interests to canoeing and golfing. The faculty at Michigan choose more vigorous sports, including skiing (one member even has a row-tow in his backyard), tennis (they challenge all other departments at the annual AIChE meeting), ice-hockey (several have backyard rinks for practice), touch-football, basketball, baseball, squash racquets, and handball.

Dick Balzhiser fitted quite naturally into this environment both as a student and later as a faculty member. He completed his baccalaureate in four years, ranking at the top of the entire class of 800 in engineering, and still found time to play varsity football, to take an active part in an incredible number of other extracurricular functions, and to support his family (which then included two children) by working as a research assistant.

He did not secure the position of first-string fullback until the middle of the second season because the coaches were somewhat distracted by the priority he gave to laboratories over football practice. However, once given a chance to play he demonstrated his superiority in spite of limited practice.

As an undergraduate he did not receive financial support related to his athletic activities. However, when he began graduate work he secretly accepted a position as Assistant Freshman Football Coach (primarily as an excuse to be out on the practice field every fall afternoon). We became concerned that this responsibility might impede his doctoral work and awarded him a Fellowship the next year with the proviso that

he stop such "moonlighting". We presumed he had resisted temptation until the coach credited the upset of Iowa's championship team to the superb job of scouting done by Dick. Dick was embarrassed but rationalized this misdeed on the basis that he had refused to accept any payment and had driven his own (very old) car to Iowa City.

Despite such diversions Dick completed his doctoral work in due course. He has since done an outstanding job of teaching and research, receiving numerous awards. He has also found time for scholarly, professional and administrative work, and to provide leadership in an amazing list of community, religious, business, social and political activities, culminating in a term as Alderman and Mayor Pro-Tem of Ann Arbor and in a year in Washington, D.C. as a White House Fellow.

It is hard to predict what Dick Balzhiser will do next. What ever it is will be well-done.

Biographical Material

Dr. R. E. Balzhiser is professor of chemical engineering at the University of Michigan. Along with his athletic letters he also holds BS, MS, and PhD degrees from Michigan. His teaching career started as instructor there in 1957 and his outstanding teaching and research activities resulted in promotion through the ranks to professor in 1967.

Among the honors and awards received by Dick the following are mentioned most frequently:

- Western Conference Award (Big Ten) for proficiency in both athletics and scholarship
- Outstanding Young Professor in College of Engineering
- Outstanding Young Man of Ann Arbor, Junior Chamber of Commerce Award
- Elected Mayor Pro-Tem by fellow councilmen
- Outstanding Young Man of Michigan (one of five)
- White House Fellow

Dick continued his interest in nuclear engineering as project director for over \$600,000 of research work for the Atomic Energy Commission and the Aeronautical System Division in liquid metal technology. He is a consultant to a large chemical company and editor of a "Chemical Engineering Series" of textbooks for a well known publisher.

Some of Dick's activities and experiences as a White House Fellow are detailed in the next article. While in the Defense Department he assisted in organization and incorporation of Alliance for Civic Action, a group concerned with the nondestructive application of military resources to society's problems.

The White House Fellows Program was established by President Johnson in 1964 to give rising leaders from all fields one year of "firsthand, high-level experience with the workings of the Federal Government.