



Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

Gary Vliet

Honorary Mechanical Engineer, 2016

BS, ChemE, University of Alberta, 1955

Ph.D., ME, Stanford University, 1962

Professor Emeritus

The University of Texas at Austin

Gary Vliet was born in Alberta in 1933. One of his fondest childhood memories was living on a ranch at the foot of the Rockies and, for a period, attending a one-room schoolhouse with one teacher and nine students scattered over nine grades. He received a BS in Chemical Engineering at the University of Alberta in 1955, and his Ph.D. in mechanical engineering at Stanford University in 1962. After a ten-year career at Lockheed Research Laboratories in Palo Alto working mainly in thermal cryogenics for space applications, he joined the Department of Mechanical Engineering at The University of Texas at Austin in 1971. At UT he taught and researched in the areas of 'thermal systems' and 'solar energy' until retiring in 2005. He feels fortunate in having spent most of his career in the mechanical engineering department at UT and being associated with the 'thermofluids' group, who were congenial faculty colleagues and serious 'educators'. Working with eager young people and congenial colleagues has been particularly rewarding. Some of his best recollections have been working with students groups: the Pi Tau Sigma ME Honor Society, two groups of students involved in Renewable Energy national competitions in the 1970s, and three

national Solar Car Races in the 1990s. His three favorite classes were thermodynamics, heat transfer and solar energy. He began teaching a graduate/senior course in solar energy in 1975 and offered it each year until retirement. As for research, he feels most rewarded by work in solar energy and developing a several-year 'Solar Radiation Database' for Texas.

He has enjoyed retirement, which has permitted him and his wife to travel: Norway, New Zealand, China, Turkey, St. Petersburg and dog-sledding in Alaska! In addition, he's had time to write two books, 'Texas on This Day' (history) and 'Suzanne', (history of a family member), and has served as an editor of our Department of Mechanical Engineering history volumes. As for hobbies, he much enjoys participating in the local Paleontology Society of Austin and offering hands-on science lessons to school children using 'solar car kit materials' he developed.

He has been happily married to his wife Donna (a two-degree Longhorn!), for 55 years and they have three children (all Longhorns!) and four grandchildren.