



Mechanical Engineering  
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

## **Marcel Emile Gres, P.E.**

*Mechanical Engineering Hall of Fame, 2007*

BSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1947  
MSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1950

*Senior Vice President (Retired)*  
Tracor, Inc.

Marcel Emile Gres was born to French parents Elie P. Gres and Germaine M. Gres on April 16, 1922, and raised in San Francisco California. After graduating from St. Ignatius College preparatory School, he attended Santa Clara University on a football scholarship. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Marcel enlisted in the navy, and was assigned to the V-7 Officer Candidate Program, returning to college. In 1943, he was sent to The University of Texas at Austin, where he continued his studies and was a letterman on the Texas football team that won the Southwest Conference championship in 1943. After graduating from Midshipman's school, he served on minesweepers in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. In 1946 he was discharged from active duty, returned to UT Austin to complete his studies, and married Charlotte Mayes.

Upon graduation from UT, Marcel worked for General Electric in Schenectady, New York. After a year, he accepted a position as instructor in Mechanical Engineering at UT and studied for his master's degree. Thereafter, he went to work at the Defense Research Lab (DRL) where he led the Mechanical Engineering section. In 1956, Marcel left DRL and helped found Textran Corporation. Textran was a small engineering firm conducting research in countermeasures and very low frequency technologies. In 1962, Marcel was the catalyst for the merger with Texas Research Associates to form Tracor, Inc. Tracor became the first Austin-based company to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange, and was Austin's first Fortune 500 company.

Marcel's innovations during the early years of Tracor were major factors in laying the foundation

for the international scope and success of Tracor's technological products and services. He was a technical expert in mechanical design and systems analysis. Marcel made significant contributions to the Talos, Minuteman, and Sidewinder missile programs. He was instrumental in the development of military defense systems, including radar counter measures, the first global positioning system (GPS) for the Defense Department, and the design and construction of an environmentally-friendly waste disposal system in the Middle East. Engineers under his guidance conducted research into sonar systems and developed audiometers for the military's use. Marcel also oversaw the research and development of a new design for continuously variable ratio transmissions (CVT) before the practical application of this technology was accepted by the automotive industry. Additionally, Marcel led the team that restored and refitted Tracor Marine's dry dock in Everglades, Florida.

At Tracor, Marcel was on the Board of Directors and held several management positions before retiring in 1987. He was a member of Sigma Xi and Pi Tau Sigma, the Honorary Mechanical Engineering Fraternity. In 2007 Marcel was inducted into the UT Mechanical Engineering Academy of Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame. He was one of the founders of the Austin Yacht Club and a member of the Headliners Club. He served on the board of directors of Tracor and the Austin Cerebral Palsy Center. After retiring, he did consulting work at Tracor and several small companies in Austin. Marcel enjoyed snow skiing, sailing on Lake Travis, playing golf, and traveling. He passed away in Austin on January 5, 2013, at the age of 90.