

Joseph Linville Rosson

December 7, 1919 — April 1, 1995

Joseph Linville Rosson was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on December 7, 1919. (Colleagues who know of the date would good-naturedly kid him by saying they knew two bad things that happened on December 7, one was Pearl Harbor, and the other)

After graduation from the University of Tennessee with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering degree in 1942, he joined the Naval Reserve as an ensign. It is interesting that he spent the 90 days of his commissioning indoctrination at Cornell.

By his discharge in 1946, he had risen to the rank of Lieutenant and the position of commanding officer of an LSM (Landing Ship Medium). Although he served in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Pacific theatres, his colleagues do not recall that he recounted any “war stories.”

Joe spent 1946-47 as an Instructor at the University of Tennessee Junior College. While there, he contacted Jack Tarboux (who had been the Head of EE at Tennessee when Joe was a student there, but who was now a Professor of Electrical Engineering at Cornell) concerning graduate work and employment. Through Tarboux’s efforts, Joe became an Instructor and a graduate student in Electrical Engineering.

Upon receiving his Master of Electrical Engineering degree in June 1951, he was appointed an Assistant Professor. He was highly recommended for promotion to Associate Professor in 1956, but the Engineering College administration felt that he had not had enough research experience and so decided not to promote him. He then took over the directorship of a research project on the atmospheric refraction of radio waves (an area completely unknown to him because his experience in teaching and in industrial contacts had been in electric power and feedback control). His performance on that project led to his promotion to Associate Professor in 1957. He became a Professor in 1969 and, upon his retirement in 1986, an Emeritus Professor.

If only one word could be used to describe Joe in his professional career, it would be *versatile*. Others would include *dedicated*, *loyal*, and *unselfish*.

Shortly after his promotion to Associate Professor, Joe was asked to represent the University on an extra-high-voltage cable project sponsored by the Association of Edison Illuminating Companies of the Edison Electric Institute. In collaboration with electric utilities and cable companies, he coordinated the construction and

installation of operating facilities and designed all the test and measurement systems. In addition, he trained more than 60 students to operate the field facilities on 24-hour schedules.

When the project was completed in 1964, the cable text was considered a landmark event and Joe was the recipient of the highest compliments and commendations from all the industry officials concerned.

Joe was appointed Assistant Director of the School of Electrical Engineering in 1965 and subsequently Associate Director in 1975. In these positions he was responsible for course and staff scheduling, the budget, non-academic staff, and student-faculty relationships. While carrying out these administrative responsibilities, he continued to teach undergraduate courses and to advise students. In all of these activities, Joe's performance was considered to be outstanding.

In 1968, he became the advisor for a Master of Electrical Engineering design project of an electric vehicle for urban and suburban transportation. More than 70 students participated in all aspects of developing and manufacturing five prototypes of electric vehicles, three of which were licensed for continuing study and evaluation. In 1970, a Cornell team was placed first in the National Clean Air Race, and in 1977, another Cornell team won the Emission award in the Urban Vehicle Design competition.

Joe was a member of the honorary societies, Eta Kappa Nu, Tau Beta Pi, and Sigma Xi. He was also a member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers.

Joe's non-professional life was as interesting—and full—as his professional life. His dedication to students was as great outside the classroom as it was in. (The students lovingly referred to him as “Pappa Joe.”) He could always be counted on to participate in any activity that they would organize—golf, bowling, poker, bocci ball, Monte Carlo night, Delta club (a student-faculty organization whose only activity was beer drinking. The initiation consisted of chug-a-lugging a quart of beer and, for many years, Joe held the record—nine seconds over both students and faculty. He said it was simple—”just open up your throat.”).

Joe played golf on a regular basis with a Phillips Hall foursome for many years. He enjoyed all aspects of the game whether spectator or participant.

Joe had an extraordinary talent for getting people together whose cooperation was essential to building up a successful event. Every spring he collected an enthusiastic team of students and faculty (along with his devoted wife, Olive, whom he married in 1950) to prepare the food for the school's Annual Alumni Breakfast get-together.

While they were busily cooking away, Joe never failed to give them encouragement and, when all was done, they especially appreciated his sincere words of thanks (and the alumni appreciated the excellent breakfasts!).

The annual end-of-term picnics he organized were also appreciated. Many think back fondly of the refreshments, games, and especially the good-fellowship they enjoyed.

When Olive died in December 1991, Joe decided to move to a retirement home in Memphis, where he died. He is survived by his son, Michael and daughter-in-law, Marianne of Brooklyn, New York.

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