

R E M E M B E R I N G M E L V I N A . E G G E R S



“A Legacy for Excellence”

Syracuse University Bids Farewell to Chancellor Emeritus Melvin A. Eggers.

Those who remember the Syracuse University of 25 years ago recall an institution far less polished and stable than the version Melvin A. Eggers left behind.

The decade of the seventies arrived rudely here, bringing with it student protests, a strike-shortened academic year, and a confrontation between rock-throwing students and pepper-gassing police. It also included three straight years of declining enrollment, a budget deficit projected at \$2.2 million, a \$9-million backlog of deferred maintenance, and a leadership void—the

Chancellor’s seat was vacant for the second time in two years. A student on the 1971 committee to name a new Chancellor neatly summarized the situation. Responding to a reporter’s question about candidates, he said, “Anybody in his right mind wouldn’t take the job anyway.”

Eggers disagreed; he took the job.

A professor of economics since 1950, Eggers entered the Chancellor’s office with the support of the faculty, a commitment to consensus-building, and a course of action based on containing costs and developing a strong academic program to increase enrollment. It

worked. By the end of his first full year, he had balanced the budget, reversed the slide in enrollment, and started to rebuild the University’s fiscal and physical assets. He’d also made clear his agenda: “We are building for the future rather than trying only to meet emergencies on a day-to-day basis.”

Eggers continued that course of action until his 1991 retirement. He died November 20, six weeks after the dedication of the final project he began at Syracuse University, the \$22 million companion building to Maxwell Hall. Named in honor of the former Chan-

cellor, Melvin A. Eggers Hall stands as a monument to the man who solidified the University's academic strengths, tripled the endowment, and reshaped the campus.

"He has left this institution with a legacy for excellence," says Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw.

"He guided the University to great heights, using his vision to help it achieve national prominence," says H. Douglas Barclay, chairman of the University's board of trustees. "The board of trustees, the alumni, the faculty, and the whole University community owe him a great debt of gratitude."

Under Eggers, enrollment rose by more than 3,000 students, the number of faculty members grew from 869 to 1,004, and faculty grants increased from \$12.5 million to more than \$22 million. He presided over 29 major building projects, including the Center for Science and Technology, the Schine Student Center, the Crouse-Hinds School of Management Building, and the Carrier Dome. In addition, he directed the renovation of numerous buildings, including the massive overhaul of SU's oldest structure, the state-ly Hall of Languages.

Eggers also guided SU through the

Campaign for Syracuse, a \$160-million fund-raising venture that funneled much-needed aid into teaching and research activities, academic equipment, student financial aid, and distinguished faculty chairs, which made possible the long-term appointment of many highly regarded scholars. This aid helped the University achieve a better balance between teaching and research and "propelled our academic program to new levels," says Gershon Vincow, the vice chancellor for academic affairs.

Born February 21, 1916, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Eggers earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in economics from Yale University. He also served in the United States Navy during World War II.

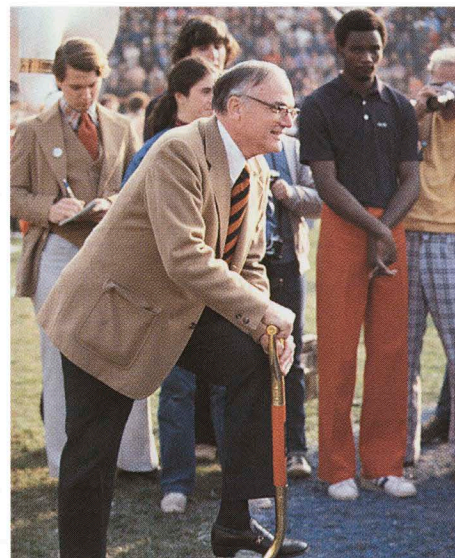
Eggers joined SU as an assistant professor of economics in 1950 and became chairman of the department 10 years later. In 1970 he was appointed provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. He became acting Chancellor in March of 1971 and was named the University's ninth Chancellor four months later.

On his first day as acting Chan-

cellor, Eggers agreed to meet with 600 protesting students to address their demands. Rather than meeting emotion with emotion, he initiated a program of low-key negotiations. The approach was typical Eggers. "He was always willing to look at all sides of a question," says Clifford Winters, the University's former vice chancellor for administrative operations.

Eggers' proudest moment as Chancellor may have accompanied Renee Schine Crown's \$3-million gift, which enabled the University to forge ahead with construction of the long-awaited student center, opened in 1985. His lowest moment undoubtedly arrived with the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, which killed 35 Syracuse University students.

Eggers' 20-year reign as Chancellor was exceeded in length only by James Roscoe Day (1894 to 1922) and William Pearson Tolley (1942 to 1969). The latter recalls Eggers as "a superb teacher and administrator. He had a profound impact on classroom instruction and scientific research. He was a man who led by example and was committed to the pursuit of excellence. His influence will grow with the passing years."
—BOB HILL



Melvin A. Eggers as Chancellor: Presiding over ground-breaking ceremonies for the Carrier Dome in 1978, and leading commencement exercises for the final time in 1991.