

## Alexander Nicolaas Gerritsen, 1913-2009

Alexander Nicolaas Gerritsen, Purdue University Emeritus Professor of Physics, of West Lafayette, Indiana and Allenspark, Colorado, died peacefully on Monday, May 18, 2009 at University Place where he lived. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Jacqueline Koolhaas Gerritsen, by his children, Rob Gerritsen (ex-wife: Joyce Metcalf Gerritsen) of Philadelphia, PA; Jeroen Gerritsen (wife: Jingyee Kou) of Baltimore, MD; by his grandchildren, Keith (wife: Kate Sundeen), Corey (wife: Sara Elice), Jeffrey, Tristan, and Alida Gerritsen; and by two sisters-in-law and a brother-in-law in The Netherlands.

Alexander N. Gerritsen was born November 29, 1913, in The Hague, The Netherlands to Sander Gerritsen and Gerritje van der Willik. He earned a bachelor's degree in physics from Leiden University in 1933 and was accepted there for further graduate study. However, World War II intervened, and he was mobilized into the Netherlands Army in 1938 as a medic, having also served earlier in 1935-36. After the Dutch capitulation in May 1940, he went back to the university to resume his studies. He managed to continue his scientific research during the war years, and also joined the Dutch Resistance movement, for whom he smuggled forged documents and contraband, for assistance to Jews and Resistance fighters in hiding. At the University he met Jacqueline Koolhaas, and they married in 1943. After the war, he was able to resume his studies in full and obtained his Ph.D. in physics in 1948. He was appointed Instructor at Leiden University at that time.

In 1956, he was appointed Assistant Professor at Purdue, and the family moved to West Lafayette. At Purdue, he taught physics and continued his research in low

temperature physics, studying the electromagnetic properties of transistors and semiconductors at temperatures colder than  $-196\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-321\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). He always supported the arts, with abiding interests in classical music, architecture, and visual arts. He encouraged his wife, Jacqueline, in her development as an Indiana artist. He hired an Indianapolis architect (Evans Woolen III) to design the family home on Wheeler Lane in West Lafayette, a Bauhaus-style house with a very open and light interior.

He retired from Purdue in 1979, and spent summers with Jacqueline in a second home they built in Allenspark, Colorado. There, he became involved with the Rocky Ridge Music Center, a classical music education center that offers summer instruction for music majors in the Rocky Mountains. He was on Rocky Ridge's board of directors for many years, and Chairman during the 1990's. Since 2005, he and Jacqueline have resided at University Place in West Lafayette.

A remembrance ceremony will be held at 3 PM on Saturday, May 23 at University Place, 1700 Lindberg Road, West Lafayette, with reception immediately following. The family requests that no flowers be sent, instead, donations may be given in Alex's memory to Rocky Ridge Music Center, 465 Longs Peak Road, Estes Park CO, 80517, [www.rockyridge.org](http://www.rockyridge.org).