

In Memoriam

Professor Bob Bartels

Robert C. F. Bartels was a Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at the University of Michigan and retired director of the University of Michigan Computing Center. Bartels was born the second of three sons to German immigrant parents in New York, and he grew up in humble surroundings both in Brooklyn and in rural New York. His mother's strong will that her children should be educated led to the three brothers each earning a Bachelor's degree, Robert Bartels' degree being in engineering.

Because of his training, he was able to find a position as a junior technician with Bell Telephone Laboratories in New Jersey, a prize of some consequence during the Depression. When Bell instituted a program of educational support that offered people at his rank the opportunity to return to college and earn a post-graduate degree, he took advantage of this to enter the graduate program in electrical engineering at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Unfortunately for Bell, he dropped into a mathematics lecture one day on the advice of a friend, became interested in what he saw, and changed his major.

In 1938 he earned a Ph.D. in mathematics, married Virginia F. Terwilliger, of Madison, Wisconsin, and accepted his first academic position at the University of Michigan. From that year until the summer of 2006, with a time-out in World War II to work on research with the Navy in Washington DC, he has been a resident of Ann Arbor and a Professor of Mathematics (active or retired) with the University of Michigan. In late 1958, when the University of Michigan planned to move its small computer operation off campus and discontinue 1958, when the University of Michigan planned to move its small computer operation off campus and discontinue general computer access to students and faculty, he embarked on a

successful campaign to reverse this decision and to establish a viable central computing facility to support teaching, research, and administration. He became the Computing Center's first director in 1959 and remained at its helm until his retirement in 1978. During that time he actively promoted the University's development of Computer Science education and research. Important advances in programming languages and operating systems were nurtured in the computing environment he established. Bartels was also responsible for organizing an important series of short courses and lectures during a 15-year period with the U-M Engineering Summer Conferences in the late 1950's and early 1960's that encouraged some important early developments in the theory and software for computer mathematics.

In 1978, when he retired, he took up an interest together with his wife in American Art Glass, and during the course of the next 20 years they established an impressive private glass collection, guided by the considerable historical knowledge of American Art Glass that they acquired. Robert Bartels departed peacefully in his sleep at the Swan Creek Retirement Village in Toledo, Ohio, on the night of September 9, 2006. He is survived by his wife, Virginia; by his sons, Richard (Renate) Bartels and Albert (Jacqueline) Bartels, by his grandchildren, Robert, Adrienne, and Ainslee; by his great-grandchildren, Ziggy, Ansel, and Isabel and by numerous nieces and nephews