In Memoriam: Richard Kassander, UA's First VP for Research

College of Science
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Arno Richard "Dick" Kassander Jr., the University of Arizona's first vice president for research and first director of the Water Resources Research Center, died on July 27 in Mesa, Arizona. He was 96.

Kassander came to the UA in 1954 as an associate professor of physics and the associate director of the UA Institute of Atmospheric Physics. He became professor of physics and director of the institute in 1956.

When John Schaefer, then the UA's new president, asked Kassander to become the vice president for research, he initially was turned down. Shortly thereafter, Kassander changed his mind and said yes, Schaefer recalls.

Kassander served as vice president from 1972 to 1982.

"He was an original, creative thinker and had done a tremendous job of developing the atmospheric physics program and was clearly a guy who was committed to strong research programs," Schaefer said. "He was the first major appointment of my presidency."

"We were making a play to be a national research university," he said. "Dick was the kind of visionary we needed at that time. He appreciated what research was all about and why it was important for the University to make its mark there."

Under their leadership, the UA successfully pursued federal research grants and greatly expanded the UA's research capability. Kassander's portfolio as vice president for research included the Lunar and Planetary Laboratory, Flandrau Planetarium and the Environmental Research Laboratory.

Kassander's energy, intellectual curiosity and broad interests inspired his family, faculty members, and both graduate and undergraduate students. He was also willing to take a chance on new ideas and new people.

He gave physics graduate student Philip Krider a summer job in 1963 to do research on lightning. Now a UA professor emeritus of atmospheric sciences, Krider is internationally famous for his research on lightning. His work led to the U.S. National Lightning Detection Network.

"Dick Kassander was a very inspiring person to work with because his interests in research were so broad. Lightning research was not a big area at the time, but he was willing to take a chance," Krider said.
Kassander's daughter, Helen Ruskin, remembers that whenever the family went on a trip, her father found something scientifically fascinating to explore.

"He had enthusiasm for any kind of learning," she said. "I remember driving and his telling us about the rock formations."

Kassander also was concerned about the environment, she and others said, and recognized the need for interdisciplinary approaches to solve problems such as the world's increasing need for energy, food and clean water.

He encouraged environmental research centers at the UA, including the Controlled Environment Agriculture Center and the Environmental Research Laboratory. Projects at those centers included hydroponic farming, dryland shrimp farming, and water desalinization.

**Carl Hodges**, former director of the Environmental Research Laboratory, met Kassander when Hodges came to the UA as an undergraduate in 1955.

"He saw potential in me I didn't know I had," Hodges said.

He and Kassander shared an intense interest in environmental issues, especially those in arid lands. The two became lifelong colleagues and friends.

"We talked about the problems that would be created by an increasing population where there were limited resources, and how do we solve those problems," he said. Kassander helped Hodges develop the Environmental Research Laboratory to pursue such problems.

"Dick had great intellectual curiosity. He loved the University of Arizona. He loved transferring his curiosity," Hodges said.

Born in Carbondale, Pennsylvania, in 1920, Kassander graduated cum laude from Amherst College in 1941 with a bachelor's degree in geology. In 1943, he earned a master's degree in geology from the University of Oklahoma. He worked as assistant geologist for the Texas Co. in Wheeling, West Virginia, in 1941 and as a research assistant for Magnolia Petroleum Co. in Dallas in 1943. From 1943-46, he served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

He received a doctorate in physics from Iowa State University in 1950 and was an assistant professor there from 1949 to 1954.

He joined the UA faculty in 1954 as an associate professor of physics and advanced to professor in 1956. In addition to serving as the director of the Institute of Atmospheric Physics from 1956 to 1973, he was the first director of the Water Resources Research Center from 1964 to 1972, professor and head of the UA Department of Atmospheric Sciences from 1958 to 1973, and vice president for research from 1972-1982. He was the founding director of the Division of Industrial Cooperation at the University of Arizona Foundation from 1982-1985.

Kassander was a founding member of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research and served as chair of the board of trustees. He also was a member of the U.S. President's Science Advisory Board, Panel on the Environment; consultant to the National Science Foundation; consultant to the Office of Science and Technology, Executive Office of the U.S. President; and was a member of the National Advisory Committee on Oceans and
Atmosphere.

His honors and awards include being elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a fellow of the American Meteorological Society and a fellow of the Arizona Academy of Sciences. Amherst College awarded him an honorary doctorate of science in 1971 and the University of Arizona awarded him an honorary doctorate of science in 1986.

He was on the board of directors of First Interstate Bank, the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum and the Burr-Brown Research Corp. He also was a member of the Tucson Airport Authority, Goals for Tucson/Tucson Tomorrow, the Tucson Rotary Club, the Tucson Literary Club and the Southern Arizona Water Resources Association.

He is survived by daughter Helen Ruskin and two grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the University of Arizona Foundation, the Community Foundation of Southern Arizona and the American Red Cross.

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