



OBITUARY FOR JOHN GRADO, JR.

John Grado, Jr. was born in Bristol, Virginia, to John and Trula Belle Grado in 1927. Following his graduation from Bristol Virginia High School at age 16, he entered Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (better known as Virginia Tech). With the advent of World War II, his education was interrupted in 1945 when he enlisted in the United States Navy. Two years later, he re-enrolled at Virginia Tech and subsequently graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering in 1951. His first job out of Virginia Tech was with U.S. Steel in Longport, Pennsylvania, but after a few months, he returned to his hometown to work at Monroe Calculating Machine Co. In 1954, a job offer from West Virginia Pulp and Paper Co. lured him away to create automated paper finishing lines. After that move, he never left the paper and printing business, finding new and different challenges in that industry to deploy his industrial engineering expertise.



Mr. George Wallace, then President of Fitchburg (Massachusetts) Paper Co., met Grado in 1956, offered him a job as First Chief Industrial Engineer and later became a mentor and role model for Grado. At age 30, Grado became Vice-President of Fitchburg Paper and President of the Decotone Division, with plants in the U.S. and Belgium. Grado found that the Decotone Division was an industrial engineer's paradise, with many opportunities for productivity improvements, as Grado famously remarked "...because everything was done wrong." Within one year under his watch, the previously unprofitable division was turning a six-figure profit. Grado's significant impact was noticed by Mr. Wallace and the Board of Directors and – at age 35 – he became Executive Vice-President of Fitchburg Paper and President of Decotone. Four years later, he became President of Fitchburg Paper, which subsequently merged with Litton Industries, resulting in Grado being named Vice-President of Litton for the Paper, Printing, and Forms Group. At the time (1967) his company numbered 5,000 employees and was responsible for about \$300,000,000 in annual sales.

In 1983, Grado made a bold move when Litton Industries decided to sell its paper and printing business. Grado assembled the necessary financing and bought the Litton Paper, Printing, and Forms Group at a price of \$70,000,000. He retained 52 percent of the stock ownership, with 18 percent to key employees and 30 percent to Realex Capital Corp. He changed the name of the company to Technographics. In 1999, Technographics was sold, Grado retired and 12 key employees received more than \$1,000,000 each as a result of stock options provided by Grado. Taking care of his trusted employees was a hallmark of Grado's leadership.

Grado's accomplishments in the Fitchburg community were voluminous, and in 1984 he was chosen as the Businessman of the Year for Worcester Co. He served on the Board of Directors of the Fitchburg Gas and Electric Co., First Safety Fund National Bank, Fitchburg State College, American Red Cross, George Wallace Foundation (Boston), American Paper Institute, Gene Sarazen Foundation, United Fund, Oak Hill Country Club, Applewild School, Chamber of Commerce, The Young President Club (Boston), Massachusetts Taxpayers Assoc. and several others. Fitchburg State College also awarded him an honorary doctorate.

As a volunteer and a philanthropist, Grado has given unselfishly of his time and his funds. For over a decade, he provided all materials and real estate for the construction of multiple Habitat for Humanity homes. At Virginia Tech, he provided several scholarships to student-athletes, and contributed to several other programs of the university. In his home department of Industrial and Systems Engineering – in addition to endowing several academic scholarships in 1987 – he established the John Grado Endowed Professorship. Grado later endowed the Grado Department of Industrial and System Engineering at Virginia Tech.

Grado began his service role with Virginia Tech as a member of the College of Engineering's Advisory Board. He also served Virginia Tech as a member of the College of Engineering's Committee of 100, Presidents Award, Ut Prosim Society, International Industrial Engineering Department, Presidents Circle, the Virginia Tech Foundation Board, the Board of the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, and the Advisory Committee for the John Grado Industrial Engineering Department.

Grado was further honored with the Virginia Tech Distinguished Alumni Award, was one of 89 past and present recipients of the Academy of Engineering Excellence Awards, and was also awarded the Industrial and Systems Engineering Distinguished Alumni Award.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 18 years, the former Corrie J. Spruit, and daughters, Leighann Grado-Bates (peter), Pamela Grado, Kristina Grado (Aaron), his granddaughter, Summer Mahoney-Marshall (Corby), his great-grandson, Beck Marshall, and predeceased by his daughter, Kathy Lynn Grado. At his passing, Grado was a resident of Marco Island, Florida, another community to which he was a philanthropic leader because of his time, effort and financial contribution to many local charitable originations and causes, and maintained a summer home in northern Georgia.

Condolences may be sent to the Family at
1137 Blue Hill Creek Drive
Marco Island, Florida 34145
Funeral Services are pending and
will be privately held

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations
may be made at
Habitat for Humanity
121 Habitat Street
America, GA 31709



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Portions of the above memorial were adapted from the program for the dedication ceremony in which the Virginia Tech Industrial and Systems Engineering Department was renamed for John Grado, Jr., in honor of his financial endowment to the department. John G. Casali, Grado Endowed Professor and Department Head at the time of the Grado Endowment in October, 2000, who prepared the text, recently said “at the time of being named to the Grado Professorship in 1996, little did I know what the opportunity to get to know and learn from this outstanding alumnus and exemplar in industrial engineering would bring to my own career, as well have such a positive impact on almost every facet of our department. His generosity to Virginia Tech and many other charities, and his genuine love for students has greatly enhanced and will continue to improve the lives of many individuals.” Virginia Tech President Emeritus Paul Torgersen, who met Grado nearly 50 years ago after becoming head of the department that would later bear Grado’s name, said “John was a very successful industrialist who was willing to share his expertise and financial successes with others, and to a great number of people, he was like an older brother, giving advice but only when requested. He was a giant among men. He will be missed by many.” G. Don Taylor, who now heads the Grado Department, said “John Grado was a man of great integrity and generosity. He was very successful and he gave freely to help others to climb the ladder with him. Although we will have heavy hearts for a while, we can be proud of his legacy, and we can be honored to carry his name forward.”

In the Spring of 2015, a memorial service for John Grado, Jr. will be held on the Virginia Tech campus, a place that he considered very special and frequented often.

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