

Louis A. Girifalco: SEAS

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Louis Girifalco, University Professor of Materials Science emeritus at Penn Engineering and a beloved member of the Penn community, died in Bala Cynwyd, on April 15. He was 90.

Vijay Kumar, Nemirovsky Family Dean, Penn Engineering, wrote, “Lou was a devoted faculty member in MSE. He was an exceptional researcher and scholar and dedicated teacher and mentor. He was well-known throughout Penn Engineering and Penn for his exceptional service and love of this University. Lou was truly one-of-a-kind and will be missed.”

Louis Girifalco

After obtaining a BS in chemistry from Rutgers in 1950, Dr. Girifalco earned his MS and then his PhD in applied science, both degrees from the University of Cincinnati. He worked as a research chemist for du Pont and was head of the Solid State Physics Section at the Lewis Research Center NASA Flight Propulsion Laboratory before coming to Penn in 1961.

Dr. Girifalco began his career at the University as an associate professor of metallurgical engineering, later becoming a full professor of metallurgy and materials science. He wrote 93 refereed papers in solid-state physics and materials science as well as several books. He was a member of such professional societies as the American Physical Society, The American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Society for Metals, the Materials Research Society, and Sigma Xi. Dr. Girifalco was also an Honorary Trustee and served as chairman of the Board of Associated Universities, Inc., which was responsible for the operation of Brookhaven National Laboratories and the National Radio Astronomy Observatory.

Dr. Girifalco also held numerous administrative roles at Penn, including director of the Laboratory for Research on the Structure of Matter, 1967-1969; chair of the department of metallurgy and materials science, 1972-1974; associate dean for SEAS, 1975-1979; vice provost for research, 1979-1981; and acting provost in 1981. The University Research Foundation was designed during his tenure as vice provost. He also served in numerous other leadership roles, including Special Advisor to the President for Industry Relations, chair of the Committee on Open Expression, chair of the Senate Committee on Administration, and PASEF Program Chair. He was also a member of various committees: the Council Committee on Research, the Senate Nominating Committee, the 1987 Provost's Search Committee, the Senate Committee on Faculty, the Steering Committee and the Council Committee on Honorary Degrees. Dr. Girifalco also served on the search committee that selected Eduardo Glandt as dean of SEAS in 1998.

In 1981, the Board of Trustees designated Dr. Girifalco as a University Professor, and he earned emeritus status in 2012. Dr. Girifalco was awarded an honorary degree doctor of science from Hahnemann University in 1996 for his research on how alloys are formed and how materials behave; for “bringing together scientists and helping us understand the process of change;” and his contributions, which began at an early age when his doctoral thesis on the physical chemistry of physics became a standard text in the theory of interfaces.

Dr. Girifalco was an avid writer. In addition to his scientific articles and books, he published books for a general audience on gravity, the game of craps, and a memoir, *Never Turn Left: Voices from the Second Generation*.

He is survived by his wife, Catherine; children, Sandra (Sam); Anthony (Renee); John (Mary); Robert; Dori (John) Malloy; Theresa (Tony) Spagnoletti; and Stephen; his brother, Salvatore (Lynne); and sister, Dorothy DeStephano; 14 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, donations to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia in Dr. Girifalco's name would be appreciated: 3401 Civic Center Blvd., Philadelphia, PA 19104. Visit: <https://give.chop.edu> (<https://give.chop.edu>)