

*Honoring the Career of*  
**Charles Wolf, Jr.**

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MICHAEL D. RICH



## **Honoring the Career of Charles Wolf, Jr.**

*On June 8, 2015, RAND president and CEO Michael D. Rich delivered the following remarks at an intimate luncheon honoring the ideas and contributions of Charles Wolf, Jr., and his 60 years of service at RAND. Attendees included three previous RAND presidents: Harry Rowen, Don Rice, and Jim Thomson.*

When I invited all of you here today to celebrate Charles Wolf's 60 years with RAND—the longest tenure of any RAND employee—I didn't tell you the whole truth.

For one thing, Charles still has a couple of weeks to reach his 60th anniversary. He signed in at RAND on June 23, 1955. So, we're jumping the gun a bit.

And while it might be true that this is the first and possibly last time that a RAND employee will be marking 60 years with the institution, Charles is still going strong. He and I have been working on a new project—an important track-two engagement with the Central Party School in Beijing. We are one signature away from an exciting two- or three-year project, which will be financed by a gift Charles helped secure of more than \$1 million. So the record of 60 years at RAND will soon be 61, 62 . . .

Still, the *length* of Charles's RAND career, while distinctive, is not the main reason it's notable. Quite apart from length, Charles's time at RAND has been unusually significant, unusually memorable, and unusually varied. Consider the following:

- His personal research has produced an impressive set of intellectual contributions to several fields and many critical issues of the time.
- His 14-year leadership of the RAND Economics Department not only shaped the cadre of economists and statisticians at RAND for a generation or two, but also enriched numerous other organizations where distinguished RAND alumni went on to serve.
- What he accomplished in 27 years as the founding dean of the Pardee RAND Graduate School makes him one of the intellectual founders of modern policy analysis and some of the institutions that go with it.
- And his philanthropy—the generosity of Charles and Theresa Wolf—is helping to ensure that RAND will thrive for years to come and is setting an example for all the rest of us.

This combination of his achievements and contributions in those four separate domains is really why I wanted to shine a spotlight on Charles's first 60 years, beginning with this lunch but also with other things we are planning as the year unfolds.

This is a good time to acknowledge the small committee that is helping me—Marcy Agmon, Jen Gould, Jim Hosek, Maura Krah, Dick Neu, and Peg Schumacher.

Theresa [Wolf], his wife, and Harry [Rowen], RAND's second president (who hired Charles), have seen all of Charles's career at RAND, but none of the rest of us has, so I want to tell you a little more about his achievements and contributions in each of the four domains:

- the researcher and public intellectual
- the talent scout and mentor
- the dean, and
- the philanthropist.

Let's start with "the researcher."

First, a disclaimer: No six-decade research career can be easily or briefly summarized, so it is inevitable that my attempt will contain many omissions. After all, Charles's RAND bibliography alone contains 284 entries.

It's possible, though, to note a few broad areas because Charles has returned to them repeatedly and productively:

- economic development, particularly in Asia
- the economics of communist systems and their later transitions to market-oriented societies
- foreign aid and security assistance
- burden-sharing among allies.

Charles's research has always been direct, and it's been practical, grounded in the circumstances of specific countries and times. Running through all of his work, though, is a single intellectual thread—attention to the economic foundations of international relations and international security. Gradually, project by project, paper by paper, book by book, Charles developed a way of understanding and explaining how economic forces shape the international political environment and how economic instruments can advance U.S. and Western interests. This way of thinking has been a valuable—indeed, essential—complement to the political and military analyses that typically dominate these discussions.

At the same time, Charles has been an influential contributor to thinking about the respective competencies of market forces and governments. It is typical of Charles's insight that he began where other analysts left off. Others saw shortcomings of markets and superficially recommended government action. Charles insisted on recognizing that governments, too, sometimes fail and offered careful analysis about when and why government action may not be preferable to even less-than-perfect markets.

He's written hundreds of books, articles, and peer-reviewed RAND reports, and was far ahead of the times in his use of op-ed pieces and short commentaries to get important aspects of his thinking into the public discourse. For several years, Jim Thomson and I would report our op-ed statistics to the board of trustees in two ways: with and without Charles Wolf's pieces in the count. The emphasis that we at RAND have been placing in recent years on expert commentary, op-eds, and blog posts to extend the reach of our analysis beyond our clients and grantors? It is nothing new for Charles.

As you can see, Charles's research career has been remarkable, and we would be saluting him even if that were his only category of accomplishments. But it isn't, not by a long shot.

Let's turn now to Charles as the talent scout and mentor.

Charles had been at RAND for 12 years when he was appointed head of the Economics Department. That was in 1967, a time of great change for RAND—the beginning of our programs of research on social policy issues—and, of course, it was also a time of great turmoil outside of RAND. RAND at the time faced the challenges of sustaining its extraordinary capabilities in national security research while greatly expanding its research on domestic policy.

That meant that Charles needed to ensure that RAND could attract and keep first-rank national security economists, and he also needed to recruit and integrate into RAND a new cadre of economists and statisticians who could tackle the domestic issues. He succeeded. New members of the department hired by Charles were soon designing and fielding the RAND Health Insurance Experiment, the most significant social-policy experiment of the 20th century. They were collecting data on family decisionmaking in developing countries, and they were studying welfare reform, black–white earnings differences, fertility decisions, and labor supply. They wrote on cable television policy, water resource allocation, and regulation of the international telephone industry. They helped design the all-volunteer military and studied the structure of the Soviet economy, the cost of weapon procurement, the education personnel system, and the extent of inequity in public school financing.

Fortunately for RAND, Charles had an extraordinary network of contacts at top universities, and he could call them to ask about a candidate or get a lead on a summer associate. He built these contacts in his academic positions at Cornell and Berkeley and in his first dozen years at RAND. The contacts were critical to implementing the core of Charles’s recruiting strategy, which was to recruit from the top departments. His strategy helped to build the Economics Department and broaden RAND’s external reputation for excellence, and it set a standard that has endured.

Charles’s leadership of the Economics Department also coincided with a significant societal shift. The growing participation of women in the labor force in the late 1960s and 1970s caused organizations to think about what positions should be open to them and whether they should be paid as much as men. Some argued that because women had, or would have, family responsibilities, they should be paid less than men. Charles engaged head-on in this debate, and challenged this line of thinking by reasoning that if RAND could hire women who were equally good as men and get them at a lower price, then it would make sense to hire *only* women. Under Charles’s leadership, the department in fact hired many women, and they were hired on the same terms as men. The percentage of women economists and statisticians at RAND today is far above the average in university departments, and this leadership in gender equality dates back to when Charles headed the department. Charles also argued successfully within RAND to allow departments to hire and retain married couples, a stance that often gave us an edge in attracting talent.

Perhaps Charles’s greatest legacy as department head can be found in the many superstars who joined the department or began their careers when he led it. Some are still working at RAND—Emmett Keeler, Bernie Rostker, Jim and Sue Hosek, Michael Kennedy, Jim Smith, Dick Neu. Still others took positions at universities and in government that gave them the opportunity to educate new generations of students and shape public policy in other ways. A partial list of those luminaries: Joe Newhouse, Chuck Phelps, Arleen Liebowitz, Finis Welch, David Chu, Patricia Danzon, Bill Butz, Linda Cohen.

His next role lasted more than a quarter century: Charles as the dean.

Just a few years into Charles's tenure as department head, Harry and the trustees decided to launch the RAND Graduate Institute, one of the eight original graduate schools of public policy, and what we now 45 years later know as the Pardee RAND Graduate School. The school was launched as a five-year experiment, and Charles was selected to be the founding dean.

Whereas it was Harry and the trustees who launched the graduate school, it was Charles who established it. He built all the processes of a modern graduate school—admissions, qualifying exams, financial aid, faculty committees, commencement. He led the conceptualization and design of the curriculum. He confronted the financial complexities of OJT [on-the-job training] and the bureaucratic complexities of operating an educational institution inside a think tank, complexities that included widespread skepticism, as well as opposition from people like Andy Marshall and Bill Graham. Charles overcame that opposition and guided the RAND Graduate Institute, later the RAND Graduate School, through its first accreditation and later two reaffirmations.

To help accelerate the process of earning credibility for the new graduate school, he assembled an unmatched academic advisory board with Nobel laureates and other luminaries from different fields: Judith Blake, Tom Schelling, Murray Gell-Mann, Ken Arrow, Bob Solow, Marian Diamond, Bill Libby, Paul Samuelson.

Charles has chaired 12 dissertation committees and served on five more. His advice and assistance are acknowledged in a dozen other dissertations. He has incorporated literally dozens of Pardee RAND students into his own projects, and many appear as coauthors of Charles Wolf publications.

Just as impressive is the imprint he made on the new field of policy analysis. He was one of the founders of the flagship professional organization, the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, and served as its second president. He helped launch its policy analysis journal and wrote widely cited papers on ethics and policy analysis, and policy analysis and decisionmaking, blending his formidable research and training.

Now, 45 years later, the Pardee RAND Graduate School is still the only public-policy graduate program specializing in the Ph.D. degree and the only one based at a public-policy research organization. It is the foremost program in the field, offering a unique educational experience for an elite group of students from around the world. We now see many of its distinctive, trailblazing features—like on-the-job training—copied by other graduate schools. And, the school is at the core of my vision for igniting a new wave of experimentation, risk-taking, discovery, and innovation that will energize all of RAND and, in the process, push out the frontiers of policy analysis again, just as Charles did at the very beginning of the school.

We have all benefited from Charles's personal philanthropy.

He and Theresa have made financial contributions, and they have inspired additional support from alumni, friends, volunteer leadership, and other stakeholders.

In 2008, Charles and Theresa personally committed to strengthening the graduate school's core endowment, and we were proud to honor that extraordinary gift by creating the Charles and Theresa Wolf Conference Room in the Pardee RAND wing of our Santa Monica headquarters campus. This quickly became the school's main hub for exchanging ideas, connecting people, and learning.

For years, they have also loyally invested in a special school endowment, the Theresa and Charles Wolf, Jr., Endowed Fund, which is steadily growing through their regular contributions.

Theresa's artwork is showcased throughout the halls of the school.

The Charles Wolf, Jr., Endowed Lecture Series was established over a decade ago by other friends of RAND inspired to honor Charles. Lectures in the series address important and timely policy issues. Past lecturers have included Bob Bartley, Gary Becker, and Harry Rowen. We will soon announce the 2015 Charles Wolf, Jr., lecturer.

And, in 2014, friends and alumni of Charles set up a new tribute fund in his honor to provide support to future Pardee RAND students. We continue to receive contributions to this fund in tribute to Charles's central role in launching the graduate school.

Charles has excelled as a researcher, as a department head, as dean of the graduate school, and as a philanthropist. Four domains, four different roles, countless accomplishments and impacts on people, policy, and this institution.

I feel especially fortunate to have the chance to preside over the 60th anniversary tribute to Charles. Charles is the one who hired me into the Economics Department at RAND, and he gave me experiences with the graduate school that I never in a million years thought I'd have: teaching a course, chairing the qualifying exam committee, chairing dissertation committees, and chairing the admissions committee, to name just a few.

My career has been entwined with Charles in one way or another ever since I arrived. Watching what he's been able to accomplish in those four domains helped convince me of the unlimited potential of RAND, which is why I've devoted my career to it.

So, as he completes his 60th year at RAND, please join me in a salute to Charles Wolf for a uniquely influential, important, and inspirational career, in which he has

- made major personal research contributions in multiple policy areas
- established new institutions
- made important contributions to the science of policy analysis
- pioneered new methods for disseminating research findings and recommendations
- shaped the future of RAND through his recruiting and mentoring
- strengthened RAND and the Pardee RAND Graduate School well into the future with his and Theresa's philanthropy, setting an example for the generations that will follow them.



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
EDUCATION AND THE ARTS  
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT  
HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE  
INFRASTRUCTURE AND  
TRANSPORTATION  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
LAW AND BUSINESS  
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