

**Thomas E. Vollmann
1937-2009**



Thomas E. Vollmann, Professor Emeritus at IMD in Switzerland, died on March 26, in Lausanne. He joined IMD, where he was a professor of manufacturing management, in 1989 and had previously been a visiting professor at IMEDE from 1979-81. Tom received his PhD degree from UCLA. He was a member of the faculty at Dartmouth College, the University of Rhode Island, Indiana University, INSEAD and Boston University before joining IMD. He was a founding member and a key contributor to the Managing Manufacturing 2000 Research Project.

An active member of APICS for many years, Tom was a key player in the MRP Crusade and a critical contributor to and leader of the APICS certification programs. In 1974 he worked with colleagues at IBM to establish the now famous MRP Seminars delivered by IBM to introduce its then-new production and inventory control software package. The photo below shows the membership of what would evolve into the MRP Mafia: the attendees of the first MRP Seminar (there was a follow-on seminar as well). Tom was in charge of the "guest list." These seminars

served their purpose in laying the foundation for dissemination of the news about the "Copernican" (the phrase coined by Joe Orlicky) breakthrough in manufacturing management. It also established friendships and working relationships in our field which would endure for decades.

At about the same time of the MRP Crusade, many of these people met and worked together within the (also newly formed) Production Management Division of the Academy of Management. Others were key players in the foundation of the American Institute for Decision Sciences (now the Decision Sciences Institute). Tom was a regular attendee at the Division's annual poker game, regularly ensuring that refreshments were delivered in a timely fashion.

The Vollmann, Berry, and Whybark text/reference was first published in 1979 by APICS as *Master Production Scheduling: Principles and Practice* and evolved into *Manufacturing Planning and Control System*. The 1997 version continues to sell; the 2004 expansion is entitled *Manufacturing Planning & Control Systems for Supply Chain Manage-*

ment. Tom's article with Jeff Miller, "The Hidden Factory," was published in the Harvard Business Review in 1985 and is recognized as a seminal work in the field. Several of the cases Tom co-authored at IMD have been recognized in the annual awards of the European Case Clearing House.

Tom's approach to attacking problems was uniquely effective: he served as cheerleader, nag, arguer, challenger, credit-giver, typically while walking—with appropriate and timely sustenance. Those of us who go far back with him still groan over wrestling with CRAFT, recall lengthy arguments within APICS and their resolution without rancor, smile remembering his sumptuous office at Indiana (when he was consulting with Ethan Allen), and recall the many friendships and collegial relationships which grew from his extraordinary skill in developing our field by cheering and supporting colleagues.

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The above photo was taken at the Academic Faculty Members' Seminar on MRP (February 17 – 20, 1974), held in conjunction with the Manufacturing Industry Education conference in Poughkeepsie, New York. Back row: Roy Harris, Jim Clark, Jerry Kilthau, Steve Goodman, John Carlson, Bob Britney, Howard Prout. Middle row: Joe Orlicky, Dick Chase, Ed Davis, Ted Weston, Gene Groff, Vince Mabert, Bill Fisher, Stan Hardy. Front row: Jeff Miller, Bill Berry, Tom Vollmann, Jay Ross, Linda Sprague, Tom Hoffmann, Phil Carter, Warren Boe, Dick Gonzalez.