Dr. Nathan Allen “Al” Coward was born in Belton, South Carolina on 7 January 1927. He graduated Belton High School in 1944. He served in the U.S. Army from 1944-1947 and was discharged to active reserve, then honorably discharged as a 1st Lieutenant in 1955. He served in overseas duty as executive officer, 1542nd Engineer Base Survey Company, 29th Engineer Topographical Battalion, Philippine Islands from 1946-1947.

He attended The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, graduating with a B.S. in Chemistry in 1950. He received his Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry in 1954 from the University of Rochester, New York. He worked in the chemical industry in Philadelphia, PA for five years, and from 1959-1989, he was a faculty member of the Chemistry department at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. He was an instructor of chemistry from 1959-1960, an assistant professor of chemistry from 1960-1966, and a professor of chemistry from 1966 until his retirement in 1989. He did post-doctoral work in the summers of 1962, 1963 and 1965 at Kansas State University, and did visiting professorships at UW-Madison in 1967 & 1968 and at Purdue University the summers of 1971 & 1973.

Al married Doris Elaine Cooke on 2 May 1953 in Jamestown, New York. They had four children; Jim (1954), Susan (1957), David (1961) & Ellen (1966). His scientific influence was closely followed by his daughter Susan, who received her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree in 1986.

Al was a member of Central United Methodist Church; the Duluth/Superior American Chemical Society; Sigma Xi; Sigma Pi Sigma; UWS Academic Affairs Council; Ad Hoc Committee on Integrated Liberal Studies; UWS Medical Technology Committee; UWS Committee for Academic Planning; UWS Admissions Committee; UWS University Senate; The Ad Hoc Committee for Evaluation on Summer Session; UWS chairman of Student Appeals Committee; active in the UWS Extended Degree Program; coordinator for the ACS Accreditation Visit; teacher/consultant for Indian Health Education Careers at Headlands Institute in Mackinaw City, Michigan; a member of the Town of Oakland Volunteer Fire Department and Superior Lodge No. 236, F&AM.

He dedicated himself to helping his students succeed, and felt a great deal of pride in the UW-Superior chemistry department’s graduates over his thirty years of teaching. He held his students to high standards, and was always there to help anyone who needed assistance in their studies or in the lab. He was known as an excellent instructor who epitomized the phrase, “He was tough, but he was fair.”

Al loved classical music and sang with the Duluth Symphony Opera chorus for several seasons, 1969-1972, as well as appearing in a Duluth Playhouse production of “Threepenny Opera” in 1970.
Al & Doris were also long time supporters of the UWS theater and music departments, particularly when one or more of their children were involved in various UWS productions from 1974-1983. He was an avid reader, especially science fiction, and wrote a number of poems in his life. He also enjoyed advanced mathematics, cryptography, electronics, computer programming, and photography. And as seriously as he took his responsibilities as a chemistry professor to both his students and colleagues, he also had a tremendous sense of humor and loved stories and jokes.

His widow, the late Doris Cooke Coward (1929-2004), dedicated some funds in his memory to create the Nathan A. Coward scholarship in 1993 for UWS chemistry majors shortly after Al’s death to help support students in the field to which he dedicated his professional life.

In August 1988 Al was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, with a prognosis of 3-6 months. A retirement party was held in his honor, where he spoke. Here are the concluding remarks from his speech:

**Comments about UWS:**

“After spending so much time here, I have developed a few opinions about the place.

I think that this is a good school.

I think that it is a strong school.

I think that it will endure.

As long as UWS has teachers who place quality instruction before enrollment increase.

As long as UWS has administrators who consider their position a duty rather than a crown.

As long as UWS has students who are willing to work as well as play.

As long as UWS has the pride and encouragement of the community at large, UWS will endure.”