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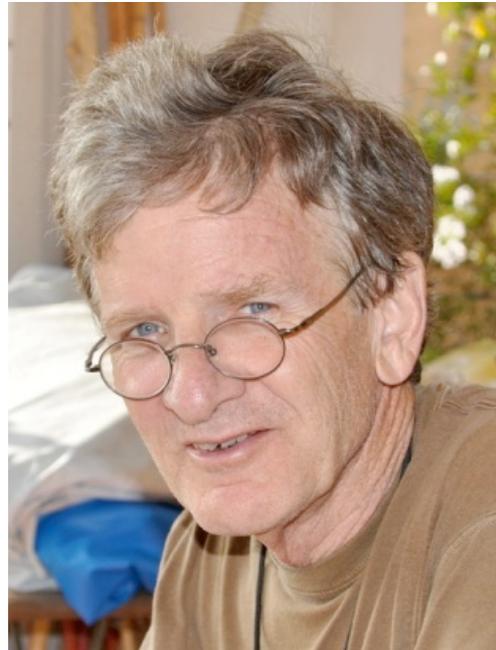
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In Memoriam of Donald Robert Thompson 1942 - 2011

Donald Robert Thompson, “Don”, our friend and colleague, passed away on the evening of 1 December, 2011 after a heart attack. Don began his career as a nuclear physicist, having graduated with his Bachelor of Science in physics from Case Western University in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1964 and his Ph.D. in theoretical physics from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis in 1968. In these early years, he studied problems of few-body nuclear reactions and stellar nucleosynthesis as a post-doctoral fellow at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California. In 1970 he returned to the University of Minnesota, where he met his wife Jackie Prince. From 1976 to 1978, Don was awarded the prestigious Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Fellowship, which brought him to the University of Tübingen, in Germany, where he became fluent in German and also acquired a life-long love and appreciation for German and European culture.



In 1980, Don joined the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland, as a principal staff physicist and applied his exceptional skills in nuclear scattering calculations to computing radar reflections of the ocean surface. He quickly became an international leader in using satellite radar measurements to measure ocean internal waves, ocean surface waves and currents, as well as marine winds. His work remains critical in understanding the capabilities and limitations of these measurements. He was one of the first to accurately predict radar cross section variations across ocean internal waves. He helped explain HF radar measurements of currents and current measurements from synthetic aperture radar. He worked out the expected reflections of GPS signals from the ocean surface, and helped develop geophysical model functions that relate ocean surface winds to radar cross section based on simulations of electromagnetic scattering. Throughout his career, Don published over 80 papers and made countless presentations at conferences and symposia. His scientific productivity never faltered even completing a paper on measuring ocean winds at X-band that was published posthumously.

Besides Don’s scientific contributions we will remember him as an enthusiastic person who loved to trigger scientific discussion in his unique vigorous and friendly way. Due to his ingenuity and openness, he was a highly appreciated project partner who also became a close personal friend to many fellow scientists. Don acted as a highly respected mentor to a considerable number of colleagues and was proud to have helped advance our careers. Many of us enjoyed Don, and Jackie’s personal hospitality in Columbia, Maryland and many of us were able to return that hospitality. Don leaves a legacy in radar remote sensing that will persist as an important part of the research in this field, and a trail of friends and colleagues extending across the globe. Don, wir vermissen Dich.

Jochen Horstmann, Frank Monaldo, Roland Romeiser, and Don’s friends and colleagues.

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