



Thomas A. Potemra (1938–1998)

After a prolonged struggle against multiple complications following a successful heart-valve surgery, Dr. Thomas A. Potemra passed away on April 3, 1998. His sudden loss is deeply felt at the *Digest*, at the Laboratory, and indeed throughout the scientific world where he was a valued member of the scientific community.

Tom joined the Laboratory's Research Center in 1965 and later found home in the Space Department. His lifelong scientific passion was the Earth's magnetic field—its science and its history. Tom's experiments on early APL spacecraft led to the measurements of vast, high-altitude electric current systems that extend into space far above the Earth's atmosphere, and his pioneering analysis of these current systems was a major advance in understanding the interaction of the Earth with its space environment. He was a principal investigator for magnetic field investigations on many spacecraft, published over 200 scientific papers, and led a group of renowned space scientists.

Tom was also deeply involved in defining and implementing major scientific missions for the nation's space program. During 1985–86, he served as a Senior Policy Analyst for space strategy in President Reagan's Office of Science and Technology Policy. He regularly directed and chaired advisory committees to NASA, NAS, NSF, and DoD. He was elected to the International Academy of Astronautics and earned the NASA Achievement Award on more than one occasion.

At the *Digest*, Tom made diverse contributions as one of its longest serving (1988–98) Editorial Board members. No task was beneath him, and none was beyond his keen intellect. His reviews for *Digest* articles were succinct and in search of technical literacy and clarity. Many an article benefited immeasurably from his exactitude.

Tom was an active participant in the annual process of selecting recipients for APL's Outstanding Publication Awards. Guided firmly in his decisions by the quality of the work and a sense of fairness, Tom combined enthusiasm, interest, and argument to ascertain that the work of staff members, particularly the younger ones, received the appreciation and reward it deserved. He was a mentor to many and a "cheerleader" to all. We will all miss him.

Kishin Moorjani