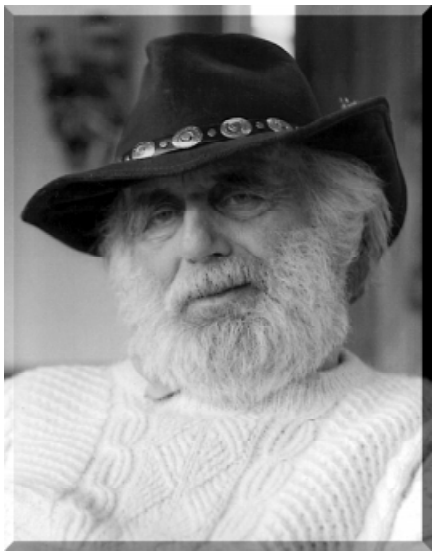

Walter G. Berl (1917–1998)

It was only four years ago that I had the distinct pleasure of paying a tribute to Walter G. Berl in the pages of this journal [Vol. 16(1), 1995] on the occasion of his retirement from the Laboratory. His health was good and spirits buoyant. It hardly seemed then that so shortly after, Walter would no longer be with us. He died of heart failure on October 24 while vacationing in Durango, Colorado. As with life, death came gently to Walter; without lingering illnesses, devoid of interminable hospital stays. When I last saw him on October 2 in my office, he was as cheerful as ever, and to my query concerning his heart, he responded, "Only my knees are giving out." The knees seemed to have fared well and took him to his prized mushroom hunting spot in Durango, but apparently the heart was not up to the task.

Walter was born in Vienna, Austria, and emigrated to the United States in 1933 when his father accepted a professorship at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, now known as Carnegie-Mellon University. Walter eventually enrolled at Carnegie-Mellon and received a B.S. in chemical engineering in 1937 and a Ph.D. in physical chemistry in 1941. In between, he was awarded an M.S. from Harvard University in 1939. During 1941–1945, he served as a research fellow and an instructor in the Department of Chemical Engineering at Carnegie-Mellon.

Walter joined APL in 1945 as a specialist in combustion, propulsion, fuels, and propellants. For the next fifty years, he distinguished himself in research, scholarship, technical supervision, as an innovative leader in professional societies and as an editor. He was a member of the APL Propulsion Panel (1955–1965), was responsible for the research and development program on high-energy fuels (1956–1965), and served as a Project Supervisor in the Launching and Propulsion Group during 1956–1963. In 1957, he was elected to membership in the Washington Academy of Sciences for his work in analytical chemistry, fuels, and chemical combustion. He held patents on a catalytic igniter for a ramjet burner and for manufacturing explosive charge. Walter was Group Supervisor of the Chemistry Research Group (1963–1972), Co-Principal Investigator of the Fire Problems Project (1972–1977), and a tireless

campaigner for public education on the unseen hazards of fires from the rapid movement of toxic gases. He published copiously, both on scientific problems and educational issues, and his enormous curiosity and pride in the work of his colleagues provided a guiding hand when he served on the Laboratory's Independent Research and Development Committee. As a member of the Colloquium Committee for over three decades, he brought many distinguished speakers to APL. Along with a number of his colleagues here he developed a curriculum on science and technology for graduate students while he was Parsons Professor at the Johns Hopkins Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, during 1989–1990. He maintained his ties to the school the following year as he continued to refine the curriculum.

Walter was a connoisseur of the written word, particularly if the word was in the service of science, a subject he embraced enthusiastically. Combined with his penchant for organizing knowledge, this love of language led to his separate but concurrent career in editing. He was the editor of a four-volume set entitled *Physical Methods in Chemical Analysis* published by Academic Press between 1950–1961. He had served as editor or associate editor of the *American Rocket Society Journal* (1960–1962), the *American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Journal* (1963–1664), and the National Research Council's *Fire Research Abstracts and Review* (1958–1964). Walter was a major presence at the International Symposium on Combustion; he served on its many committees and chaired the Publication Committee for the ninth through eleventh symposia held between 1962 and 1966. He was the U.S. editor (1966–1971) of *Combustion and Flame* and later (1972–1976) served on its Editorial Board. For six years (1967–1973) he organized the annual meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and was a Fellow of that organization. Closer to home, he was a founding member of the Editorial Board of the *APL Technical Digest* from September 1961 to August 1963. In July 1979, when the role of the *Digest* was broadened to reflect the increasing diversity of the Laboratory's tasks, Walter was entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing and implementing the changes. The first issue of the *Johns Hopkins APL Technical Digest* appeared at the beginning of 1980, and for the next seven years, it was under Walter's expert stewardship. In that short span, he launched and nurtured the journal that weaves together reports on highly focused technical subjects and articles of much broader interest, all reflecting the diverse creativity of scientists and engineers at APL. He also initiated the *APL Technical Review*, a classified counterpart of the *Digest*. Walter's intimate involvement with journals did not end at his retirement. He joined the Cosmos Club and was entrusted with editing their annual publication for 1998. He put in long hours and was mighty proud when he showed me the finished manuscript of *A Journal of Emerging Issue*s, which was sent off to press just days before he died.

Walter's ebullient excursion through science and technology, his affection for its practitioners, and his genuine interest in the work of others brought him many friends and colleagues. I, for one, enjoyed Walter's wide-ranging interests, his unconventional views and unhurried ways, and his uncanny ability to invariably come up with the *mot juste*. Even in his angriest moments, I never heard him raise his voice. Walter was always involved, but also detached; interested far more in civilized discourse than merely to assert his own views. He touched many lives, and all will miss his presence.

Kishin Moorjani
Editor-in-Chief