

John R. Apel: An Appreciation

John Ralph Apel, whose obituary appears on preceding pages, served this journal long and with distinction, first as its Editor-in-Chief and Chairman of the Editorial Board during 1986–1989 and immediately after as a member of the Editorial Board until his retirement from the Laboratory in 1996. John had definite and well articulated views on subjects that interested him. An appropriate example, quoted below owing to its continuing validity, is his reflection on the role of the *Digest* (Vol. 10, no. 4, p. 292 [1989]).

It is for us an important means of reporting on the unclassified work being done by the Laboratory staff and their associates. Its audience ranges from working scientists and engineers through program sponsors and on to the higher levels of the government. With such a mixture of readers, there is a temptation to reduce the level of discourse to the lowest common technical denominator, to make APL's efforts understandable to the widest possible audience. Some of this is clearly required. The *Digest*, however, is a technical publication, and technical material is often difficult stuff. To make all of it into sci-tech pabulum for the sake of the broadest understanding would be to dilute the intellectual contributions of the authors, most of whom are in their professions partly because of what Ralph E. Gibson, former director of APL, called "the challenge of hard thought."

John always looked for appropriate avenues to showcase the intellectual output of APL staff members and bring it to the attention of the outside world. He founded The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory Series in Science and Engineering and conducted the negotiations to have it published by the Oxford University Press (New York). The first volume of this continuing series appeared in 1992, and John served as the series editor until his retirement.

John was driven by his consuming curiosity and his firm belief in progress; to him, standing still was synonymous with falling behind. Combining intellectual rigor and integrity with a dose of lightheartedness, he readily owned up to his mistakes when warranted. That made discussions with him on topics in and out of physics always stimulating and often enlightening. Rarely have I met someone with whom I differed so frequently (particularly on political matters) and enjoyed doing so thoroughly!

Kishin Moorjani