

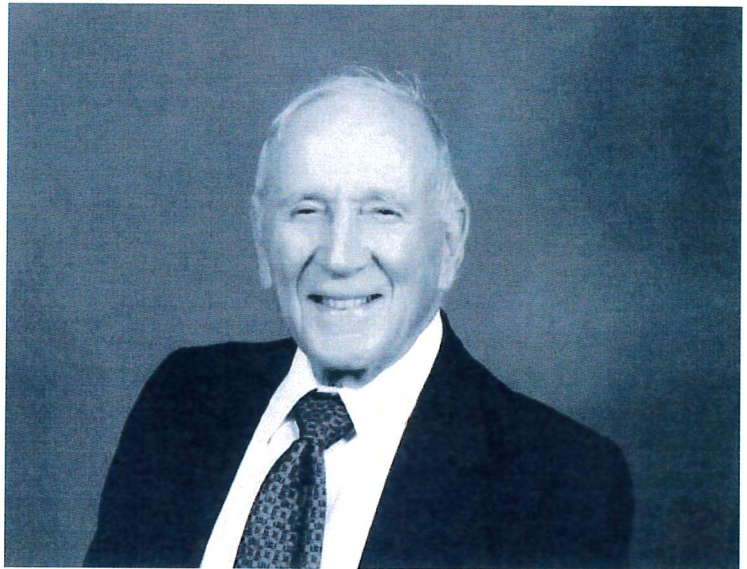
In Memoriam: SwRI remembers Retiree Dr. H. Norman Abramson

Dr. H. Norman Abramson, P.E., a retired executive officer and technical advisor for SwRI, died December 19. He served the Institute for nearly 50 years. He joined SwRI on February 27, 1956, and retired as Executive Vice President on March 29, 1991, and then served as a Technical Advisor from September 24, 2001, to March 31, 2016. He was internationally recognized as an expert in the fields of theoretical mechanics, applied mechanics, and fluid dynamics. He was a member of the National Academy of Engineering (NAE), the Texas Academy of Medicine, Engineering, Science and Technology, and a registered professional engineer.

Abramson was born March 4, 1926. He earned a bachelor's degree and master's degree from Stanford University in 1950 and 1952 and a doctorate in engineering mechanics from The University of Texas at Austin in 1956. Before joining the Institute in 1956, Abramson served as an engineer for the U.S. Naval Air Missile Test Center from 1947-1948; a research assistant at Stanford University from 1948-1951; a project analytical engineer for Chance Vought Aircraft; and an associate professor of aeronautical engineering at Texas A&M University. He joined the Institute in 1956 when SwRI was still in its first decade as an organization. He joined the staff as manager of engineering analysis and steadily rose in his career as director and then technical vice president before being named executive vice president in 1985. During his time at the Institute, he contributed to the development of a nationally recognized major research and development program in solid and fluid mechanics. He was internationally recognized as an expert in the fields of hydroelasticity for ship structural analysis and dynamics, dynamic structural response and liquid dynamic motions in marine and earthquake engineering, and dynamic behavior of liquid propellants for rockets and spacecraft.

Three Mechanical Engineering Division (18) staff members describe how Abramson was both a mentor and friend throughout their career at the Institute and touched the lives of many SwRI staff.

"Norm was a mentor to me for many years, but it was an odd relationship. I never sought him out for advice, but he would appear in my office at unpredictable times and ask questions like, 'Aren't you about eligible for AIAA Fellow?,' or 'Would you be willing to help me nominate [person] that's on that ASME committee you're involved with?' I learned over time that Norm was watching me and making sure I was recognized," said Vice President Dr. Ben Thacker (Div. 18). "I came to learn that he spent a great deal of time keeping track of some people and ensuring they received deserved recognitions and awards. I have helped him with many of these and now consider it important to try and carry on his tradition. Norm was not only highly accomplished in his career, he was also one of the most kind and thoughtful people I have ever known."



Dr. H. Norman Abramson, P.E.

Institute Engineer Dr. Carl Popelar said, "Reflecting on Norm, above all else – beyond the impressive facilities and vast array of laboratories and equipment – he believed strongly that it was the strength/capabilities of the individual staff that truly make SwRI what it is. He touted the capabilities of the staff in developing business and sizing up future directions and worked diligently in his emeritus status to ensure public recognition of their accomplishments."

Director Dr. James Walker came to know Abramson through his interactions in professional societies such as AIAA. "Norm was a big supporter of and promoter of involvement in professional societies," Walker said. "Norm's and Mr. Goland's (SwRI President, 1959-1997) support of professional activities was reflected in the fact that both the AIAA and ASME local sections were very active and revolved around SwRI for decades – engineers at SwRI produced the newsletters, provided the officers, and drove monthly meeting content. Dr. Abramson was actively involved in AIAA, ASME, and the National Academy of Engineering for over 50 years. ... Dr. Abramson included others at SwRI in his professional activities and organizations. Personally, he was interested in what I was doing and what our department and division were doing. It was a privilege to know him."

Outside of SwRI, Abramson was highly active in several professional societies, which helped elevate the Institute's visibility on a national and international level. He served as vice president and governor of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) and director of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA). He was a council member for NAE and also served on several joint commissions with NAE and the National

Research Council. He chaired the Commission of Engineering and Technical Systems Committee for "R&D Strategies to Improve Surface Transportation Security." For the Transportation Research Board, he chaired the Committee for Study of Public Sector Requirements for a Small Aircraft Transportation System, which was sponsored by NASA. He was vice chair of the Committee for a Review of the National Transportation Science and Technology Strategy. He served on the Committee on the National Institute of Aerospace Proposal Reviews, the Committee on the Role of Naval Forces in the Global War on Terror, the United States Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, and the Oversight Committee for the Strategic Highway Research Program 2.

Abramson was an Honorary Fellow of AIAA and an Honorary Member of ASME. Over the course of his distinguished career, he received numerous awards and honors including the ASME Medal (1999), the American Academy of Mechanics Distinguished Service Award (1992), the AIAA Structures, Structural Dynamics, Materials Medal (1991), the ASME Applied Mechanics Division Award (1988), the Ted Belytschko Applied Mechanics Award (1988), the ASME Honorary Member Silver Medal (1979), and the AIAA Distinguished Service Award (1973).

A prolific researcher, he authored approximately 75 published research papers in engineering and scientific journals as well as *Information Theory and Coding*, a well-known textbook. He contributed to many important monographs and other publications and industrial laboratories throughout the U.S. and Europe, and lectured at universities around the world. He also taught as an adjunct professor at The University of Texas at Austin and The University of Texas at San Antonio.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Idelle Reva Abramson, and his brother, Melvin Abramson. He is survived by sons, Phillip Abramson (spouse: Lisa Abramson) and Mark Abramson (spouse: Marilyn Abramson); grandsons, David Abramson (spouse: Lisa Abramson) and Joshua Abramson (spouse: Lynn Abramson); and five great-grandchildren, Noah Abramson, Samantha Abramson, Lauren Abramson, Owen Abramson, and Cooper Abramson; and his companion, Helene.

In his retirement article (Roadrunner, May 1991), Abramson shared these parting words, "To the staff: you are the keeper of the flame, the future of the Institute," he said. "The Institute is not just a place to work, but a place to build a fulfilling career. SwRI has a rich history and heritage that must be passed on."

● Tracey M.S. Whelan

Korbell retires from SwRI Board of Directors

John C. Korbell, a long-time Board Director and Advisory Trustee, has retired from the SwRI Board of Directors, effective December 5, 2022, and will continue to serve SwRI as an Advisory Trustee. Korbell initially became an Advisory Trustee in 2000 and served for four years in that capacity before joining the Board in 2004 and serving as a Director for 18 years. Korbell has been recognized as one of the Top 100 Financial Advisors in America by Barron's Magazine. He has bachelor's degrees in civil engineering and English from Texas A&M University. Following graduation, he served as a captain in the U.S. Air Force from 1964-1968. He went on to become vice president of Rotan Mosle Inc. where he worked for 17 years before joining Morgan Stanley/Smith Barney where he was the managing director of wealth management and served for 31 years. He currently manages Korbell Interests while also serving on the board of several nonprofit



Pictured (left to right) are Vice President – Finance and CFO Beth Ann Rafferty, President and CEO Adam Hamilton, retired Board Director John C. Korbell, Executive Vice President and COO Walt Downing, and General Counsel Mónica Trollinger. On behalf of SwRI and the Board of Directors, Hamilton presented Korbell with an engraved plaque expressing the Institute's appreciation for his dedicated service to the Institute.

organizations in San Antonio. SwRI thanks Korbell for his more than two decades of dedicated service to the Institute. He was recognized by SwRI's Executive Management team at the Board of Directors meeting in December and presented with a plaque.