

EDITORIAL

The year in which the Applied Physics Laboratory celebrated the 40th anniversary of its founding was marked by the passing of two of its past directors—first, Merle A. Tuve on May 20, 1982, and then, on February 16, 1983, Ralph Edward Gibson.

Tuve laid the foundation upon which the Laboratory is built. Under his leadership, the power of modern science and technology was creatively marshalled in the Allied cause during the cataclysmic years of World War II. Tuve's method was to pose bold technical ideas, followed by their rapid translation into practical systems.

Gibson, during his 21 years as director of the Laboratory, and for 14 more years as counselor and friend, steered an equally creative course. Most important, during the uncertain postwar years he established a sound role and stable structure for the Laboratory as a part of the University community. He was responsible for the features by which APL is recognized today: fuze and missile programs of the 1940's succeeded by a broad range of tasks in space, in the air, on and under water, and in the laboratory; consistent, unswerving support of wide-ranging and unfettered research; bonds within The Johns Hopkins University welded into a strong partnership with important new strengths, including joint research programs in biomedicine and other fields, intellectually stimulating staff exchange programs, and a highly successful APL-based graduate study program.

Gibson was an effective builder—a builder of buildings, a builder of technical programs, a builder of people. His commitment to excellence and independence of thought and action were constant and

inspiring. He was skilled in the use of the written word, from the first "Report of the Director of the Applied Physics Laboratory to the President of the University" ("Sir: I have the honor to submit the following report of the activities of the Applied Physics Laboratory for the year 1948-1949...") to the last ("This is the last report that I shall have the pleasure of writing..." (June 30, 1969)).

He had a strong sense of the history of the institution that he served so well. For more than four decades, he crafted vivid word portraits of associates with whom he had worked. Words with which he described a friend fitted him equally well:

[He] is an Edwardian gentleman in the best sense of the term. He bears the indelible stamp of an era that produced men who carry learning with modesty, humanity without arrogance, men to whom *noblesse oblige* was more than a pleasant phrase. It was the kernel of philosophy that guided their lives.

In this issue we are publishing his most recent, and now his last, contribution to the *Technical Digest*. He took much pleasure in preparing the manuscript, "Some Thoughts on Planning—The Handmaid of Direction," since it reflected his deeply held convictions on the management of a technical laboratory.

Luckily, to the very end, Ned Gibson remained as he always was during his life: a keen and wide-ranging mind, a vigorous and engaging person, a splendid man.

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