

SPOTLIGHT ON “HIDDEN PHYSICISTS”

STEVEN F. JOHNSON, SR. MNGR., INFORMATION SYSTEMS, AMGEN, INC., THOUSAND OAKS, CA

“I went from a dual BS in physics and mathematics to a MS in computer and information science to a career in software project management.”

LARRY LATIMER, QUALITY ENGINEER, FREUDENBERG NONWOVENS, HOPKINSVILLE, KY

“I earned a BS in physics from St. Lawrence University, Canton, NY, in 1971. I subsequently earned a MS in Industrial Engineering. The company that I was with in 1986 asked me to take a quality engineer position and I have worked in the quality assurance field ever since. My days as a physics student taught me how to record and analyze data in a disciplined fashion, skills that are directly applicable to quality assurance activities. The physics lab reports called for making conclusions based on data, another skill very applicable to problem-solving undertaken as a quality engineer.

Technical writing skills gained in the study of physics are also very useful to a quality engineer. A physics major has just turned out to be very good preparation to be a quality engineer.”

LARRY SHALTIS, GRASS LAKE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, GRASS LAKE, MI

“I think that you would consider me to be one of those ‘hidden physicists’. I graduated from Albion College with majors in physics and mathematics in 1972. I completed the course work for a Master’s in physics at Eastern Michigan University (EMU), although I do not have that degree because I took too long to complete the courses (I taught in the thumb region of Michigan for two years during which time I was unable to continue my Master’s work. I finished that coursework in 1977, but that was a semester beyond what EMU would recognize for the degree.) I taught high school physics for about 20 years, but left the physics classroom to configure, wire and

maintain my school’s computer network (servers, workstations, and infrastructure) and teach all the elementary school computer classes. I continued in this capacity for about six years until last year when much of my network duties were given to a computer network consultant.

I continue to support my building’s computer needs and teach the elementary computer classes and took on the added responsibility of teaching stagecraft (theatre lighting, sound, and set construction) to high school students and being responsible for all activities in my school district’s new auditorium. I left the high school laboratory classes to provide myself with the time to meet the new obligations of computer network support and now the extra time needed to support all programs occurring in our auditorium.

I continue to enjoy physics and feel that my training has prepared me well to not only cope with, but to work comfortably with the dramatic technology changes in education.”

“Hidden Physicists”

One of Sigma Pi Sigma’s greatest assets is its diversity. Stemming from a common interest in and aptitude for physics, our members have gone on to pursue a multitude of interesting and unusual career paths. Now, more than ever, we seek to draw on the wisdom and experience of our alumni.

With help from the American Institute of Physics, Sigma Pi Sigma is attempting to locate the names and whereabouts of people with BS, MS, or PhD degrees in physics whose careers have taken them away from the “traditional” physics community. We ask for your help in finding the universe of people who are trained in physics—what they do and where they are.

As the physics community faces new challenges and opportunities, we would like to engage these “hidden physicists” in the fellowship of physicists. Therefore, if you work outside the traditional physics community, please provide us with the following information. Also, if you know of others in similar situations, please encourage them to contact us. Several responses will be selected for publication in each issue of *Radiations*.

Material for publication must be received by February 15 for the spring issue, and by August 15 for the fall issue. ◇

Name _____ Position _____
Company _____
Address _____
Telephone _____ Fax _____ Email _____
Comments _____

Send to: Sigma Pi Sigma, American Institute of Physics, One Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740

CARLEEN E. RICHMOND, PHD, NEW MARTINSVILLE, WV

"I am a hidden physicist living in the backwoods mountains of 'wild and wonderful' West Virginia, in a 150-year-old house built by settlers in the region. My education is as follows: a BS in physics ('88), MS in polymer science ('93), and a PhD in polymer science ('98); all from the University of Akron, Akron, OH. I believe I was the first woman to graduate with a four year

degree in physics from my department. I was also elected to Sigma Pi Sigma, the National Physics Honor Society. My graduate research projects were applied physics problems regarding the application of Einstein's Viscosity Equation to reinforced rubber. I also produced two beautiful babies during my graduate research, and I'm a member of the American Chemical Society, Rubber Division. I have held some temporary positions in industry.

At this time, I am recuperating from a long illness and returning to my research independently. My heart will always be in physics, and I believe that we as physicists must carry the message of truth in all we do. We must not forget the magic in the light. One finding stands out above all the rest: 'What I seek most, within my feeble capacity, is to serve truth and justice at the risk of pleasing no one.'— Albert Einstein"



Joining other noted physics organizations such as the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP) and the

CELEBRATE 2005 AS THE WORLD YEAR OF PHYSICS

American Physical Society (APS), the 2003 SPS Council declared 2005 as the World Year of Physics, in commemoration of Einstein's "miraculous year" of 1905. As SPS prepares for this celebration by incorporating 2005 themes into its events and awards programs, other societies, such as APS also are making plans. The letter below gives some examples of ways that your SPS chapter can become involved with the larger physics community.

Dear SPS Members:

We are writing to enlist your help with a unique physics outreach opportunity. The year 2005 has been declared the World Year of Physics by the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP), in commemoration of Einstein's "miraculous year" of 1905. Under the theme "Einstein in the 21st Century," the APS is coordinating American participation. We hope to involve the whole physics community in a large number of activities at the local level, to bring the importance and excitement of physics to the general public.

Although we are planning a number of nationwide projects, aimed mainly at K-12 students, the year will not be a success unless physicists everywhere pitch in and organize their own events in their own communities. We have in mind activities like an open house, where the public is invited to come for a day to be both entertained and informed, or a public lecture. We hope to have available a list of speakers in case you prefer to invite someone rather than make use of local talent. Other activities might include writing an article for the public and publishing it in your local media outlet. We can offer assistance and advice with regard to media relations. In addition, any outreach that you would normally conduct during 2005 can be done under the aegis of the World Year of Physics. We can supply logos and other material for this purpose.

To help with the coordination, we have set up a Web site, www.physics2005.org, which is now fully operational. We would be delighted to include a listing of your activities, so we hope you will not only plan something but also keep us informed. To let us know what you're doing, or to discuss any other aspect of the World Year of Physics, please contact either of us or our 2005 coordinator, Vinaya Sathyasheelappa, sathyash@aps.org, 301-209-3217.

It may still be early 2004, but because of the academic calendar, the World Year of Physics will effectively run from the fall of 2004 through 2005. It is not too early to plan now. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Judy Franz
APS Exutive Officer

Alan Chodos
APS Associate Executive Officer

Gary White
SPS & Sigma Pi Sigma Director

