

Dick Daniels (W4PUJ) - SK

1932 – 2012

By Jan A. King W3GEY/VK4GEY

One of AMSAT's most important, admired and well loved members, Dick Daniels, W4PUJ ex WA4DGU died today, February 14, 2012. He lost his battle with lung cancer, diagnosed only at Christmas time 2011. Dick achieved so much working for AMSAT that it is virtually impossible to enumerate his individual accomplishments. And we cannot overestimate the importance of his sustained support. Dick was many things to us but, among them he was our record keeper, photographic recorder, and the de facto AMSAT historian. So, his loss also represents the loss of many memories of the things we did and the places we've gone as an organization, which simply can't be recorded or kept except in a mind. So, our loss is huge! The records of our earlier spacecraft developments, starting with Australis-OSCAR-5 and continuing to present, amount to over 6,000 individual (non-duplicate) 35 mm slides. These have since been digitized. These were all kept and maintained by him. Many of the photos were his own.

Dick was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on May 19, 1932. He received a BBA degree from the University of Cincinnati in Business Management in 1956 and an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania Wharton Graduate School in 1957. He joined NASA HQ in 1961 where he remained until his retirement in 1994. Dick became a licensed radio amateur in 1959. He was involved with the formation of AMSAT in 1970 and served on the AMSAT Board of Directors from 1992 to 2003.

Dick was one of the initial AMSAT members and was Life Member 11... His first major contribution to amateur radio was his work to obtain permission from the NASA Administrator (then James Fletcher) and the NOAA Administrator (then Jack Townsend) for the launch of Australis-OSCAR-5. It was Dick who pushed our AMSAT letter proposal for the launch of AO-5 through the NASA and NOAA systems. Dick was also heavily involved in our efforts to license AO5 with the FCC. That was a much bigger deal back in 1970 than it is today. Few will appreciate the resistance we had within the system from the TIROS project office at NASA/GSFC and what had to be done to overcome it. Few will also remember the support we had from places we didn't expect, but, with Dick's help and all of us pushing – we were in “business” – the “business” of building satellites for free.

Dick became AMSAT-NA's primary mechanical designer and technician, having helped design and then assemble just about every spacecraft structure we launched starting with AMSAT-OSCAR-6. At the beginning of the Phase-3 era it became clear that AMSAT needed to go into the propulsion business if we were going to get to higher orbits and Dick took on the role of chief propulsion expert, in addition to his mechanical technician duties. Dick and I installed the Thiokol solid propellant kick motor into the ill-fated Phase-3A satellite once it arrived in French Guiana and it was Dick, working with MBB who loaded the bi-propellant fuels (UDMH or AZ-50 and N₂O₄) on-board AO-10, AO-13 and AO-40 (all very dangerous compounds). Even though the rocket motor each time was pure German technology, Dick was the one we all trusted to handle the exacting task of propellant loading. He also developed, assembled and tested all of the PFAs (propellant flow assembly) units that controlled the fuel flow and pressurization of

each of the propulsion systems. He also contributed significantly to their design details. The utilization of real, high performance propulsion systems on small satellites is still something no other small satellite organization other than AMSAT has successfully achieved. Few have even attempted to follow in our footsteps. We've had our difficulties with rocket motors (and what organization that has tried to use them has not?) but, at least AO-13 was perfect. No professional organization has ever done much better than the performance of that propulsion system. And, in large measure, the success of that system can be credited to Dick Daniels. The other P3 satellites, at least had partially successful motor firings, except for Phase-3A which was lost due to a launch vehicle failure, hence we never had a chance to fire our solid rocket motor.

Dick constructed the AO-6 2M/10M repeater (or transponder) designed by Perry Klein (W3PK) and Karl Meinzer (DJ4ZC). He also constructed the follow-on unit flown on AO-7. He assembled major portions of the receiver units forming both the command system and packet communications system developed by Tom Clark (W3IWI) for the four Microsat spacecraft launched in 1990. Dick assembled so much hardware that if you were to look at each individual sub-assembly that he built or worked on – as they exist in our master photo set – and you viewed each slide for 10 seconds, it would take over an hour to view all of them! That is a lot of space flight hardware.

Dick loved space flight, he loved the challenge represented by the amateur satellite program and he loved working with our many friends around the world. Together we accomplished something that will take years before others reproduce. More importantly, with Dick's huge support we actually created a new industry. Few lives can claim to have done that. The Small Satellite Industry is very alive and well and, as a sector of all space commerce it is now the fastest growing area. If Dick had not made his contributions, AMSAT would have had a very different history but, because of him and others who worked so hard to get things started, AMSAT is at the root of all of today's small satellite technology. This is a fact, not wishful thinking.

Dick also loved nature and the outdoors. We spent many happy times hiking in the mountains of Virginia, using the "famous" Daniels "cabin" as a base camp. We had great times chasing butterflies and watching sea turtles in French Guiana. Dick has a wonderful family and even though AMSAT took a significant fraction of his free time his daughter Kathy and his son Robert are proud of his accomplishments. Like all AMSAT "widows" Jackie supported Dick's "hobby" with enthusiasm and never complained about her time alone when Dick was integrating AMSAT spacecraft on the night shift (sometimes at home and sometimes with me at the AMSAT lab). His family will miss him terribly as he was not just an average father and husband.

Dick spent a lot of time working on the gantry level of many launch vehicles, installing AMSAT spacecraft on Delta and Ariane launchers and, as a NASA-HQ employee, he built more space flight hardware in his basement than anyone working for NASA in Washington, D.C. ever even saw in a lifetime. He loved life and he made his count. And he made a huge difference to the outcome of our hobby and our belief in what an individual can do in space.

So, we've lost someone that meant a lot to us all and someone who will be impossible to replace. History may repeat itself but, it will be a long time before someone like Dick Daniels, with his unique set of skills comes our way again. So, W4PUJ is SK. This is a

sad day for amateur radio and to the small satellite space community and even more for those of us who loved him.

Dick, you made a difference and it will be a long time still before others reach where you have been. What you did wasn't just worthwhile – IT WAS FANTASTIC! I'll never forget our time working together! It was an amazing hobby, really! An amazing LIFE!

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