

DEPS Tribute to DONALD L. LAMBERSON MAJOR GENERAL (RETIRED) USAF

**Delivered by Dr. Thomas Meyer at
2009 Annual Directed Energy Symposium**

Good Morning. It is my privilege and honor to speak to the memory of Maj Gen Donald L. Lamberson who passed away March 17, 2009, at the age of 77. Don is well-known to all of us in DEPS as one of the founding fathers, but more broadly to the Directed Energy Community as a pioneer, visionary, and driving force in the development and application of Directed Energy Weapons for National Security. On a more personal note he was an important factor in my life and professional career. I first met Don when I was assigned to the Air Force Weapons Laboratory in the early 70's during the heyday of the Airborne Laser Laboratory (ALL) program. There are legions of us (many of you in the audience this morning) who cut our teeth working on directed energy at that time under Don's expert tutelage. Our paths would cross again throughout my career.

Don was born on May 5, 1931, in Dublin, Indiana. He graduated from high school in Cambridge City, Indiana, in 1949, and received a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Purdue University in 1953. He would remain a life-long Boilermaker. He was commissioned through the Air Force ROTC program at Purdue and began active duty the following year. He earned a master's degree in nuclear engineering and a doctorate in aerospace engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

During early assignments Don served as a communications officer and a weapons officer assigned to Strategic Air Command. In 1961 he was assigned to the Air Force Weapons Laboratory at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico, where he performed several nuclear weapons effects shots. In 1969 he was assigned to lead the Air Force's high energy laser program including the development of the Airborne Laser Laboratory which culminated in the destruction of several air to air missiles in flight.

Upon his promotion to Brigadier General in 1978 Don transferred to the Armament Development and Test Center at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida where he was instrumental in the development of precision guided munitions. In 1982 he became the Assistant Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for acquisition at the Pentagon. In this capacity he provided oversight to all USAF research and development programs and was the focal point for the President's initiatives on defense against ballistic missiles. Here our paths cross again since I was working SDIO programs for General Abrahamson. During this period he also worked internationally with a number of major NATO committees. Don was promoted to Major General in 1982 with a date of rank of August 1, 1978.

Don was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, the Air Force Outstanding Research and Development Officer Award, the Air Force Association's

Theodore Von Karman Citation of Honor, the Distinguished Engineering Alumnus Award from Purdue University, and the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Air Force Institute of Technology. Don retired in 1988 after an illustrious 35 year career in the Air Force.

After Don's retirement he continued his involvement as a member of the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board and a member of the Industrial Advisory Council for the Purdue University School of Aeronautics and Astronautics. He was also a member of the Air University Board of Visitors.

As you all know Don was a major driving force in the formation of our DEPS organization and served as the first President of DEPS. He continued to remain active in this organization and was instrumental in the creation of the Systems Symposium which is now held annually in Monterey in the spring. He was a consultant to industry and served as a Greybeard to the OSD Joint Technology Office. It was here that our paths crossed once again since I was privileged to join and work with Don as a JTO Greybeard for the last six years. Don was always the voice of reason and experience in all of our interactions on this panel. He even attempted to teach the Greybeards to sing, but this is one of the very few things he failed to accomplish. During our association Don encouraged me and nominated me to serve on the DEPS board.

History will record many accolades for Don Lamberson—father of the ALL and ABL, founding father of DEPS, DEPS President and active participant on the board and symposia. These are all appropriate and richly deserved. But as for me equally important is the mark of the man on each of us who knew him—his impact on our lives and careers as a friend, colleague and mentor. On behalf of the DEPS Board of Directors we proudly honor him today in memoriam.