OBITUARY OF DR. EUGENE H. BEACH

Dr. Eugene H. Beach of Silver Spring, Maryland, died on Sunday, December 9, 2007, at Sibley Hospital, Washington, D.C., after a brief illness. He was age 89.

Dr. Beach was born October 9, 1918, on his parents’ farm in Highland Township, Michigan. After graduating from Milford High School he attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor from which he earned his Bachelor’s Degree in Electrical Engineering in 1941. Later that year he moved to Washington, D.C., to work for the Naval Ordnance Laboratory, specializing in underwater mines. In 1944 he was commissioned an Ensign in the Navy Reserves and was sent to North Africa to study captured German mine technology.

Following the war he received a fellowship in Michigan’s Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies and returned to Ann Arbor, earning both a Masters Degree and Ph.D. in nuclear physics. He also served as an engineering research associate on the University of Michigan’s cyclotron rebuilding project.

In 1953 Dr. Beach returned to the D.C. area to resume work at the Naval Ordnance Laboratory (later known as the Naval Surface Weapons Center) at White Oak, Maryland. Over the next twenty-seven years he held a number of key managerial positions, ultimately serving as Associate Technical Director. He retired in 1980, recognized at home and abroad as a leading expert in underwater weaponry, including mines, torpedoes and missiles. In a retirement tribute, Admiral A. J. Whittle, Jr. noted that “Every new naval mine for the last twenty years has been developed under your technical and managerial leadership. Your professional manner and technical expertise have been invaluable to the Navy.”

Throughout his career Dr. Beach maintained contact with the academic community, having taught cooperative courses for MIT and the University of Maryland. He also participated in a number of studies for the National Academy of Sciences. Following his retirement he taught special physics courses for several years at the University of Maryland, earning an “Excellence in Teaching Award” in 1983.

More recently Dr. Beach served as a consultant to Epoch Engineering of Gaithersburg, Maryland. His work included the design for a new Stirling-cycle engine, for which he received a patent, as well as proposals for improving the efficiency of conventional gasoline and diesel engines.
Dr. Beach was an accomplished hobby woodworker and machinist who greatly enjoyed collecting and restoring antique clocks, furniture, old radios and tools. He was among the earliest members of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors which recently honored him with election to its "Old Timers and Fellows" chapter. He was also a member of Sigma Xi, the scientific research society and a Life Member of the University of Michigan Alumni Association. His professional accomplishments over the years earned him numerous awards and commendations, including three Meritorious Civilian Service Awards and a Superior Civilian Service Award, as well as listings in American Men of Science and Who's Who.

Dr. Beach is survived by his wife of 63 years, Ruby Lee (Beauchamp) Beach of Silver Spring, Maryland; their son Eugene H. Beach, Jr. and daughter-in-law Lori Ann Beach of Highland, Michigan; grandchildren Joshua, Erin and Ashley Beach; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. He will be buried in the family plot in Highland Cemetery, Highland, Michigan, beside the graves of his parents and siblings.