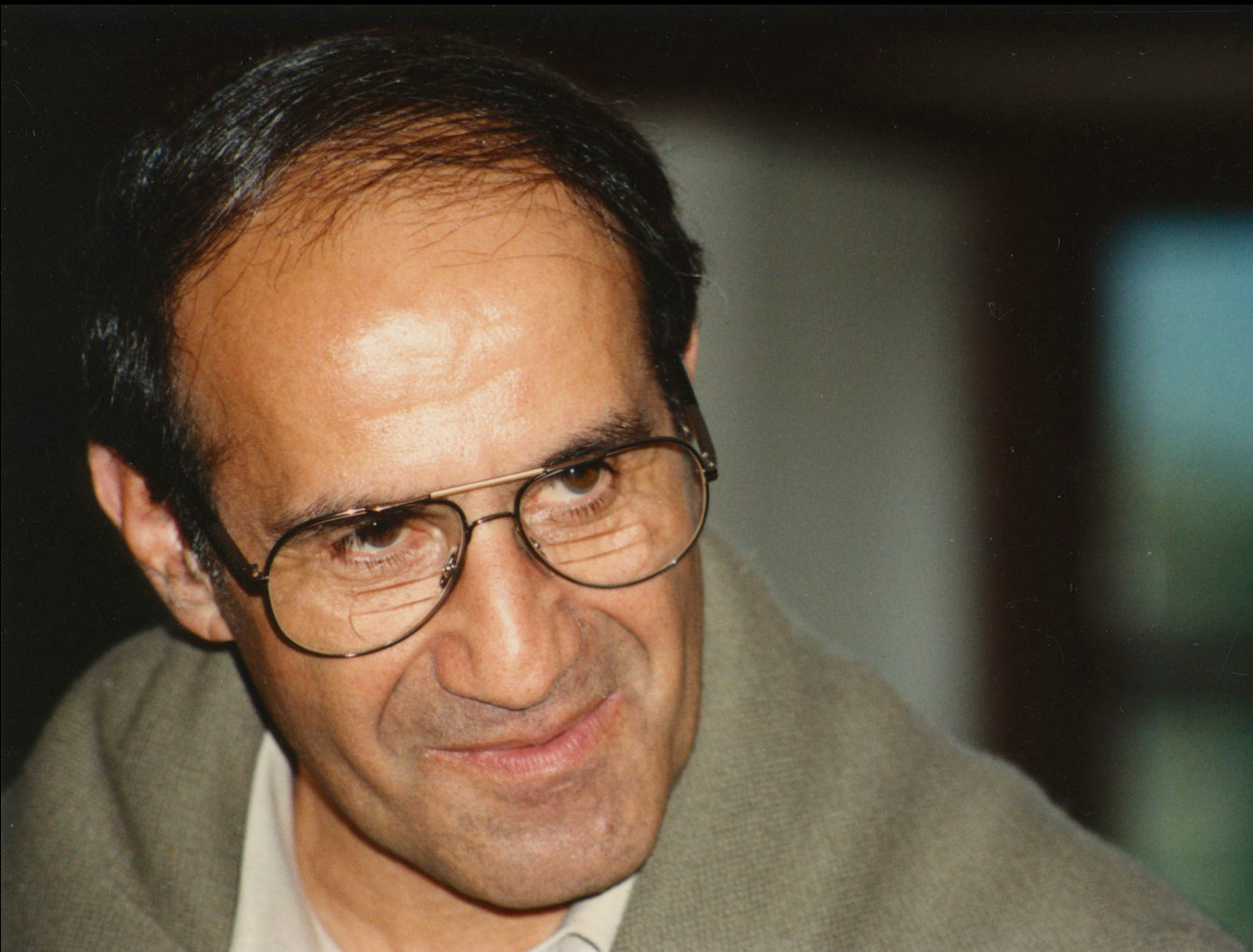


Remembering Joe Yaver





Practical and extraordinary: Joe Yaver

This booklet is intended to provide some sense of an extraordinary individual, Joe Yaver, through his contributions to building SPIE, the International Society for Optics and Photonics and reflect on his inspiration to many as a leader, colleague, and friend.

It is no exaggeration to say that Joe changed the world by bringing together engineers and scientists and encouraging their creativity. Joe was a very practical person. One result was that SPIE became the organization where applications of optics and photonics were conceived, advanced, and demonstrated. Valuing “reduction to practice” has always been a hallmark of SPIE. Much of what is familiar in our world today — smartphones, GPS, displays, life-enhancing medical tools, our vision into the glorious universe, and much more — was born and nourished in SPIE meetings organized by Joe, the “volunteers” he attracted, and the staff he led. Joe’s remarkable international reach also became a distinguishing feature of SPIE.

You will get a deeper sense of Joe from the comments from past officers of the Society, which flooded in spontaneously, and from some of the staff who obviously were motivated by Joe’s leadership and example.

SPIE was one of Joe’s accomplishments. His contributions to the Bellingham area make another inspiring story. His was indeed a life well-lived.

My sincere condolences to Agnete, who played such an important role, to Eric, and to Joe’s sister, Flo.

Eugene Arthurs, CEO, SPIE



IN MEMORIAM:

Joe Yaver, SPIE leader and visionary



Joe Yaver, Executive Director of SPIE, the International Society for Optics and Photonics, from 1969 until 1993, died unexpectedly in his sleep at his home in Bellingham, Washington, on 29 November 2016. He was 83.

Joe is credited with building the foundation for SPIE's current multidisciplinary, international scope, and shaping its place in the photonics industry. Among many milestones and accomplishments during his tenure, he was instrumental in:

- partnering with other societies and associations to establish major conferences at venues in Europe and Asia, in line with the Society's role as an international organization
- expanding the scope and reputation of the unique series *Proceedings of SPIE*, the foundation of today's SPIE Digital Library with more than 10,000 volumes published as of this year, in support of the Society's goal to provide the latest optics and photonics developments to the largest number of people
- moving SPIE headquarters from Los Angeles to Bellingham in 1977, and establishing the current headquarters campus in 1983, greatly influencing the park-like campus design
- growing membership from 1,200 in 1964 to 12,000 in 1993
- launching OE/LASE in Los Angeles (the precursor of SPIE Photonics West) and Technical Symposium Southeast in Orlando (precursor to SPIE Defense and Commercial Sensing) in 1986.

A descendant of immigrants from Poland, Joe was born and raised in Depression-era Brooklyn. Before joining SPIE, he served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War and worked in Brooklyn as a theatre producer, in Europe as a technology products advisor, and for the King County Opportunity Council.

In recent years, Yaver turned his energies to his local community, becoming an activist in protection of the environment, working to bring economic prosperity to the area, and helping to organize the Spark Museum of Electrical Invention in Bellingham.

“Joe was a great neighbor and community activist,” said friend and neighbor Gil Lund, Jr. “I credit the green spaces around Fairhaven to his relentless rallying cries. Bellingham owes him a big salute.”

“Joe will be missed by his many friends and former coworkers in Bellingham,” said Arlan Norman, Professor Emeritus at Western Washington University and chair of the Spark Museum board of directors. “His leadership at SPIE, his active involvement in community affairs, and his years of support and service to Spark are among his many contributions to the community. For those of us who knew him quite well, he was a friend and a person who was always fun to be around. He will be greatly missed by all of us.”

Yaver’s passing “was a shock to us all,” said **SPIE CEO Eugene Arthurs**. “I was bantering with him a few weeks ago at a Spark Museum board meeting. He told me he was still monitoring SPIE with ‘great pride’ and with the endless anxiety that was so Joe. I am deeply grateful for what he did for SPIE, for our entire community, and for all the staff over the years. I am humbled by his extraordinary legacy with our organization, and for his guidance since I took his old role in 1999.”



Tributes from the “Yaver years”

Chuck DeMund, 1973–74 President:

“When Joe joined us, his prior experience was with a minor non-profit in a fundraising role. Joe confided in me that — and perhaps this should come as no surprise to anyone who knew him — he had always wanted to be an actor.

“On a rainy evening in the early ‘70s we were in Manhattan for an early SPIE seminar. With time on our hands, Joe asked if I wanted to take a walk. I followed him many blocks and he stopped to stand in front of a very unremarkable building, where he told me that this was where he had studied acting under one of the greats, Sanford Meisner. The emotion evident in what may have been his first return visit to this personal ‘shrine’ was something I never will forget.

“In Meisner’s view, great acting depends on ‘the actor’s impulsive response to what’s happening around him.’ Evidently Joe learned more than a little from his mentor. He ‘acted’ his way through many situations, many involving people and technologies that he only knew a little of, almost always with palpable success.

“Joe’s theatrical skills are what I will remember best. SPIE certainly owes him many resounding curtain calls for sensing where the audiences for our ever-growing capabilities were and how to get them into our ‘theater’.”

Brian Thompson, 1975–76 President:

“I write this in tribute to Joe Yaver and his dedication to our Society after my lifetime of indentured servitude to SPIE that started in late 1963. I am thankful for the many years since; they have been immensely beneficial to my life in optics.

“A major highlight of those years was working closely with (and for?) Joe and helping his well-constructed dream for SPIE become true. The main problem we faced was needing to restructure our headquarters and increase its staffing, which was impossible to do while based in L.A. Joe’s solution was to move our headquarters to a much more affordable location. Joe’s efforts were successful—we moved to Bellingham and became a very welcome addition to the community, and what we have today is that dream come true.

“Joe, you have a significant history of accomplishment that will be remembered for generations to come and that will inspire future members and staff. Thank you, Joe.”

Joe Houston, 1977–1978 President:

“I remember clearly the occasions when he began an assessment of a difficult situation with the words, ‘as my father used to say to me...’. One of his wonderful talents was his ability to gather gifted people and guide them in accomplishing impossible tasks. He took on the world knowing that he had the backing of his loyal band of collaborators.

“One of his favorite immutable, invincible, fictional characters was Don Quixote. Many are the times that working alongside Joe on a grand plan, one felt like Sancho. Joe gave fully of himself on every occasion. We could never get enough of him and will never get over him!”

Andy Tescher, 1981 President:

“Joe was multitalented, dedicated, and a visionary (which would be an understatement), more importantly, Joe was the right person at the right time for the Society. His talents were closely attuned to SPIE’s need at its critical growth period.”

“Less understood was Yaver’s understanding of financial issues and the occasional need to resort to unconventional methods.

“Joe and I stayed at the New York Hyatt Regency on the way to Europe. Although I did not question his choice, he volunteered information regarding the cost of a rather upscale accommodation. His approach for getting a reasonable price was to call ahead to the marketing department manager and make an appointment to review the facility for a possible future meeting. Invariably the manager would arrange for complimentary accommodation. Did Joe outsmart the owner of the hotel?

“Looking back, my only regret is not to accept his numerous invitations to go fishing with him (but I really don’t like fishing!).”

James Wyant, 1986 President:

“Joe was an amazing person who did amazing things. He had a great impact on the world of optics ... he was a genius at building relationships with the optics community around the world.”



From left: Robert Shannon, Yale Katz, Joe Yaver, Andy Tescher, John Caulfield, and Bruce Steiner; Lairmont Manor, March 1979.

Barry Johnson, 1987 President:

“Back in 1972, while on a trip to California, I decided to visit the SPIE headquarters and was quite surprised to learn that it was in just two rooms, and the staff comprised three people that included Joe and Agnete.

“They were most gracious and I spent almost two hours with them learning about the operation and Joe’s vision. As everyone knows, Joe could be most persuasive and got me to agree to write a column called the ‘Infrared Forum’ which ran in almost every issue of the Optical Engineering journal until about 1980.

“Joe loved SPIE as if it was a family member and he is one of the main reasons why SPIE lived through and grew in the 1970s. He had the wonderful support of Agnete to devote himself to the Society. He was a great friend.”

Bill Wolfe, 1989 President:

“ We also argued about the future of SPIE in Orlando, his successor, and a host of things. Joe was tough but he was fair and he was determined. I have not kept track of who won those arguments, but SPIE always did. I think there is little doubt that he ‘made’ SPIE. I am proud to be associated with him (another New York guy) and with SPIE.”

Emery Moore, 1990 President:

“ Joe was certainly one, if not the best, of the three great mentors in my life. There are many accolades that could be heaped on Joe and also his close partner Agnete). The loss of Joe is a great loss to both Tina (Kidger, owner of Kidger Optics Associates) and me.”

Bob Sprague, 1991 President:

“ Joe was a driving force during many years of SPIE from its infancy to the amazing organization it is today. I worked with him very closely as president and all my years on the board and he was a tireless advocate for SPIE. I really enjoyed all those times and found them extremely productive.”



Edmund Akopov, 1992–2007 SPIE CEO in Russia:

“ Joe’s death was a great loss to all of us who knew and appreciated this unique personality. SPIE made a giant leap during his tenure, and he laid a foundation of its contemporary shape.

“ I first met him in West Berlin in Spring 1992 in the EUROPTO office, where he arrived from Paris interested in meeting ‘the guy the Russians had hired as their Chapter’s executive director’. When he had called me previously at home in Moscow, his first words were ‘You can call me Joe’.

“ He was a leader among those who made SPIE the first American-based technical society to establish a Chapter in what then was the USSR before its collapse. He understood the importance and worth of technical cooperation with the former Cold War foe, due to promising changes. Time has shown he was right.

“ I am proud to have been his friend for many years, listening to his advice and spending many hours in talks and discussions, sharing opinions and sometimes ‘crossing intellectual swords’, as he liked to say.

“ Once I asked him how he dared to enter the world of optics and photonics, very far from his previous expertise. His answer was, ‘I just read the books.’”

Tributes to the Yaver legacy

MJ Soileau, 1997 President:

“ Joe was the kind of person of whom one always remembers the first meeting.

“ For me it was in 1987 in the earliest days of CREOL. My old colleague from China Lake, Hal Bennett, was SPIE Vice President. Joe was trying to generate some sort of buzz for the Orlando meeting, which was then called Aerosense. He offered to do a deal with CREOL. If I would pay the registration for one student, he would allow ALL of our students to attend the conference. We did this and for many years the growth of CREOL tracked the growth of the Orlando meeting. Joe was a ‘damn the torpedoes, full steam ahead’ kind of guy, always determined to figure out how to make something work.

“ An important part of Joe’s personality was that of a New York hustler, pushing hard, but always finding a way to make a deal work. Another example was negotiating a deal with CREOL to migrate what we called our Winter School of short courses to the Aerosense meeting. It was a money-loser for us as a standalone activity. Joe wanted us to move it to Aerosense to share risk and benefit. The university would not allow risk. Joe came up with a formula of asymmetric benefit but zero risk for us. Deal!

“ When Hal nominated me to be on the Board, I accepted. Then I got a call from Joe saying he supported Hal’s selection, but I needed to join the society in order to serve on its board! Of course I did join and the streetwise New York boy and this country Cajun became great friends. Like all who knew Joe, I have great respect for his accomplishments, great memories of his friendship, and to a large extent owe part of my professional growth to my association with him.”



Don O’Shea, 2000 President:

“ I remember being introduced to Joe out by the pool at the Town and Country Resort and Convention Center in San Diego when I first started attending the SPIE annual meeting.”

“ He was sitting under an umbrella holding council and court. Having just met me, he confided in me as though I were an old friend on the parlous state of SPIE and enlisted my help in some project that he was starting up. Were it not for Joe, many of us would never have had the opportunities to engage in optical engineering and help his...my...our society grow and thrive.”

Richard Hoover, 2001 President:

“ I first met Joe at the Town and Country, shortly after he was invited to organize the first SPIE conference on x-ray optics.

“ Joe was on his way to the exhibitor reception and asked me to come along,” Hoover said. “I told him I would love to go but I didn’t have a ticket. He broke into a broad grin and said, ‘Come with me and we will crash the party!’ At that moment I realized I did not need a ticket. Joe’s love and enthusiasm for SPIE was truly contagious and his contributions to this Society were truly immense. He always showed great kindness.”

Jim Harrington, 2002 President:

“Larry DeShazer and I were seeking a home for a new conference on Infrared Fibers. We first tried another society but were told that this was not a topic that the organizers wished to have as a conference. We approached Joe. One of his most remarkable traits was his ‘let’s do it approach’ to bringing new conferences to SPIE. We found our SPIE home in 1980 and never left.”

“Joe was an accomplished and effective CEO,” remembered Elizabeth Rogan, Chief Executive Office of The Optical Society since 2002. “Jarus [Quinn, former OSA Executive Director] and Joe started working for the societies the same year, retired within a year of each other ... and passed away close to the same age.”



Malgorzata Kujawinska, 2005 President:

“I would like to express my deep sadness at Joe Yaver’s passing away. He was a very special person for me personally and for the optical community in Poland and in the whole of Eastern Europe.

“His role in establishing direct international links between SPIE (which at the beginning was mainly U.S.-based) and the optical community around the world was, in my opinion, among his main contributions. He had deep understanding of the importance of international links and cooperation. He had also a vision and understanding of how these could be realized despite different political systems (just remember how the political world looked in the 1970s and ‘80s) and financial conditions.

“He initiated the concept of SPIE national chapters and later SPIE student chapters. He was personally involved in establishing the foundations of these structures, helping financially, being flexible in organization, and building friendship bridges between nations and between individual persons.

“I strongly believe that his personal vision of SPIE as the international society paved the way to SPIE’s position on the international scene now. The international friendships and understanding which he initiated are the foundation of today’s SPIE.”

Brian Culshaw, 2007 President:

“ I remember Joe’s wit, dedication, humor and energy. He established the SPIE culture and was certainly one of, probably the, principal initial draws towards SPIE as far as I was concerned. He’d take risks and he’d cheer on those who worked with him with great energy — a man to be remembered with fondness and admiration, one whose legacy for sure lives on in Bellingham.... and probably throughout most of the optical engineering world.”

Kevin Harding, 2008 President:

“ Joe was a key player in making it possible to do all the things we have done through SPIE for our field today. Every technology movement needs its visionaries. Joe created the means for those visions to spread.”

Ralph James, 2010 President:

“ Clearly, Joe exemplified brilliance and persuasiveness on many fronts, and he inspired a long line of leaders within our mutually cherished SPIE community.”

“ He generously gave us his gifts of wisdom, business skills, and improvisation that were both innovative and creative. We are all fortunate to have the privilege of knowing Joe and walking a path that he worked so brilliantly to light.”

Eustace Dereniak, 2012 President:

“ SPIE was Joe’s creation and love, and we will surely miss his support and input.”



Bill Arnold, 2013 SPIE President:

“ Joe was a good friend and mentor. Joe was always interested in what was going on with the Society and had excellent insight into the skills needed to continue to build the success of the organization. He gave me a management book from his library which I treasure (I think he thought I needed a crash course when he first met me). We will miss him greatly!”

Philip Stahl, 2014 President:

“ I recall three Yaver memories: his succinct summary of ‘what is SPIE’ in his remarks at the 50th anniversary banquet; the consummate ‘sales guy’ holding his annotated research notes about every member of the Board of Directors during a board social function; and when he addressed me as ‘Mr. President’. SPIE exists because of Joe Yaver.”

Toyohiko Yatagai, 2015 President:

“I am deeply shocked to hear of the sudden death of Joe, the founding father of our Society, and I would like to offer my deepest sympathy. It was about 40 years since I has met him at San Diego. I can remember we had good talks on optics community in Japan and Asian countries. His passion on the expanding of SPIE activity to outside USA. We reminisced this, when we met at Bellingham last year, this was the last I could see him. We knew Joe was a wonderful person not only as a director but also as a human being.”



Robert Lieberman, 2016 SPIE President:

“The outpouring of comments and memories that is now flowing from those who worked with Joe over the years gives testimony to the tremendous impact he has had on our Society, and our field.”

“I feel greatly privileged to have known Joe, and in fact to have ‘grown up’ with his support and guidance,” Lieberman said. “I first met him as a newcomer to photonics, and was amazed that the exalted Executive Director of SPIE would spend an hour talking at length to a kid only a few years out of grad school about organizing a conference on biosensors. Later on, as I got to know him better, I realized this was entirely in character for Joe — tireless, dedicated to SPIE, and cheerfully willing to help others. Finally, as a director and member of the presidential chain, I benefited tremendously from his wise council, voluminous knowledge, boundless energy, and ready wit. Even during retirement, Joe was an invaluable resource and constant supporter of the organization he molded and brought to the doorstep of the 21st century.

“Joe Yaver will be sorely missed by the SPIE family, and fondly remembered by all who knew him. I salute him and his many accomplishments that will live on.”

Joe Yaver: Staff Testimonials

Reflections from Staff who worked at SPIE under Joe Yaver's leadership

“I came to work for SPIE part-time in August 1984. I was hired essentially by Joe, though went through an interview process with Cherie Jerome, Elsie Heinrich, and Marybeth Manning. I had no obvious skills that would suggest I should work for SPIE, a nonprofit optical engineering society—but I remember clearly the day Joe asked me, “How would you like to come and work for me?” I, of course, said yes, and what a wonderful career it has been. Joe was a phenomenal man, with so many skills that he put to good use building SPIE into a truly international society. I have fond memories of typing for him while he composed letters on the spot. He always used “flowery language,” keeping an even tone, never offending the receiver. I learned a lot from being the conduit of his thoughts and strive even now to emulate his style to make sure there are “flowers” in my communications. He was fair and not punitive, telling me not to “beat myself up” when I made mistakes. He hired a memorable cast of characters over the years he was at the helm, and we were exposed to lots of personalities and that in itself was a learning experience! Through all of the years of ups and downs of the economy, changes in government priorities, the rising competition, he remained calm and led by example—and he helped us all become the SPIE we are today. We will miss him as we carry on his vision and legacy.”

—Marilyn Gorsuch

“Joe was a fireball, without a filter, and deeply dedicated to SPIE—and a very caring man.

Back in the early days of SPIE, Joe would do the final interview with staff so I remember meeting with him in his office where he asked me questions about whether I'd stay at SPIE or move away to Seattle and what would happen when I had babies. All the things that are a no-no with HR now. It wasn't offensive, it was just Joe! And it worked out well as I'm still here, didn't move away and continued to work, babies and all!

I'm going to miss him. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Joe. He built the foundation for what SPIE is today.”

—Roberta Hart



“I will always remember when Joe would walk into a room and say “Hi everybody,” even if you were the only person in the room. He was usually trying to find someone to take a short note, or he has something on the computer that he needed done, and at that point, really didn’t know how/or didn’t want to learn how to use it.

Joe told me that when he was back in New York, he was either working at, part owner of, or somehow linked to, a theater. One of their young female ushers asked them to let her sing for them, as her greatest wish was to be on stage. They listened and graciously told her that she didn’t have what they were looking for. “Well,” Joe said, “that untalented girl was Barbra Streisand!

Joe and Agnete are the sweetest people, and it is an honor to know them and to have been a small part of their life at SPIE.”

—Pat Wight



“What I remember most fondly about Joe Yaver as Executive Director of SPIE was his interaction with me during hiring and several times over the next few years. When I was interviewing, Joe came into the interview room and said to me, “You don’t really want to work here do you?” And I replied, “Yes I do.” He said, “You know, this business is like a circus. You do all the practice and preparations; you take it on the road; you set it up; you put on the best show you can; then you pack it up and head for the next one.” He looked at me and said, “What do you think about that?” and I said, “I can do that, I know what I’m doing.” He said “You must be crazy, but I like your spirit. Let’s give you a chance.”

Several times after hiring he would stop by my desk and say, “Do you still think it’s a good idea to work here?” and I would reply, “Yes.” And Joe again would say, “I don’t know why you want to work in this crazy business, but I’m glad you are!”

Joe always believed in SPIE’s mission and purpose and understood the often crazy nature of the event process. But he cultivated volunteers, leadership, and staff and inspired us to do our best. Even when things went wrong he’d ask, “Did you do what you thought was right?” and then he’d support us all the way. Like a true showman, Joe would always say to us in Events – “The show must go on!”

—Randy Cross

“First, I remember that Joe was very frugal. For example, he would go down hallways turning off lights if he thought it was already bright enough! (I always thought of that as a good thing, but I’m not sure everyone else felt that way!)

Second, I remember a group of people, including myself, engaged in a discussion about politics with Joe. I noticed that he was very good about answering people’s questions, and then, in hindsight (that is, later on), it occurred to me that he had been well-spoken but didn’t really “answer” their questions at all! Maybe Joe should have been a politician!

But my best remembrance of Joe was his humbleness. Does this surprise you? Yes, he was tough when he had to be, but down deep I found him to be warm and kind. And, no, I’m not just saying that because “it’s the right thing to say.” To this day, I really thought that about him. Although I can think of several times examples of this could be drawn, the best example had to do with my then-young daughters. You may remember that I cleaned the HQ building for 8 years, and my two daughters were usually there to help. And Joe was exceptionally kind to them. One of them reminded me that Joe would often give them quarters so they could buy themselves candy bars! And both of them told me how friendly he was.

On another level, I distinctly remember an animated conversation Joe had with a couple of employees who were trying to convince him to take a certain course of action. I just happened to be there at the time; I was NOT eavesdropping. As I said earlier, he was tough when he needed to be, and despite their best arguments, Joe did not bend. Obviously, I have no idea who was “right” in that case, but I found myself having a lot of respect for Joe. He could not be easily swayed and continued to lead as he thought best.

—Craig Moir

“Joe was the Executive Director when I started working at SPIE as an editor in the Journals Department in May 1992. I had only worked here for about a year when he retired in 1993, but he definitely left a strong impression with his unique leadership style and ebullient personality. Over the years I’ve occasionally run into Joe and Agnete around town and it was always great to see Joe still going strong in his retirement. Their son Eric went to my alma mater, PLU.

Joe will be greatly missed by the SPIE community. My heartfelt condolences to Agnete and Eric and all of Joe’s family and friends.”

—Karolyn Labes

“I absolutely agree with the widespread observation that Joe was the right person at the right time. It’s plain to see just how much his vision and energy – supported and informed by Agnete’s wisdom and insight – shaped SPIE’s current form and enabled its success in meeting the Society’s missions of providing education and professional opportunity for individuals, and advancement of technologies that contribute so much to our lives.”

—Amy Nelson

“I worked part-time for SPIE during my years at Western and then was hired full-time upon my graduation. My memories of Joe were always his unbounding energy and his efforts to make SPIE a fun place to come to work. Bagel-Wednesdays, monthly birthday cakes, ice cream on the lawn on a sunny day... he may not always remember your name (his greeting of “Hi Everybody!” when I may be the only person in the office), but his love of SPIE and the staff was always genuine.

—Michele Hurst Bennett

“In 1982 Joe gave me the keys to the fledgling SPIE computer systems. We had a mutual respect that resulted in him keeping me on despite many arguments. Having given me the keys Joe then firmly resisted every suggestion that would advance the contribution IT could make to the Society because it took money from marketing; “the administrative tail wagging the marketing dog” as I recall. It was a challenge, yet always a respectful challenge.

From a career perspective I was able to parlay that opportunity into a 33-year career with many chances to learn, to grow, and to contribute. I have no idea what my life would have been like had Joe not had faith in me throughout those early years.

From a personal perspective Joe taught me much about what it meant to be a man, an adult. I’d never been in any job, nor home nor relationship for that matter, for longer than a few years; it was always easier to move on. Joe taught me how to engage passionately, and consistently, despite the odds. He taught me it was OK to argue, regardless of relative rank, from a place of respect. He taught me how to stand my ground, speak my piece, and respect my opponent, for in the end we were on the same side.

And, he warned me every time I hugged Agnete that he’d had men shot for less.

After SPIE we would bump into each other in Fairhaven; he invariably asked how I was doing, and how the Society was doing. And he always suggested we get together for coffee; sadly we never made that happen.

He was a special man, and will never be forgotten.”

—Al Gill

“I enjoyed the feeling of family when Joe was here as our director. I enjoyed it when he would come to Accounting and see how things were. It was nice to meet Anita too. Another good memory was when Joe would let us leave early the day before a Holiday. That was always appreciated.

My deepest sympathy is with Anita and Eric.”

—Debra Joslyn

“Joe was a visionary and an entrepreneur. He was endlessly curious, creative and undeniably driven. He could be charming, funny and self-deprecating. As a self-described paranoid he’d often quote the old adage “just because I’m paranoid doesn’t mean someone isn’t out to get me!!” He loved bringing people together and had a knack for creating unexpected and exciting outcomes because of that special talent. Joe and Agnete Yaver were the heartbeat of SPIE for many, many years and their work together as a team is in many ways the bedrock of SPIE’s success today. Together they fostered an attitude and behavior in SPIE staff that came unfailingly from a place of inclusion and a sincere desire to serve the optics and photonics community. I am honored to have known Joe and to have worked with him and for him. I will miss his fierce spirit. Although I suspect that he is not done quite yet— rather that as he arrives in heaven he will start working on “just a few small improvements” that he’s been mulling over for a while. “

—Marybeth Manning

“It was always a pleasure to “ride the wave” with Joe, even if you weren’t quite sure where it was taking you. My kids still remember Joe giving them a quarter when they came to the office.”

—Rich Donnelly

“Joe Yaver helped people fulfill their dreams on whatever level they were ready for and capable of. He did that for me and for all those that worked around me at SPIE headquarters and many others in the industry that we learned how to serve and even nurture by watching Joe. I always felt privileged to work personally with Joe, to hear his wild ideas and see their beauty, to be asked to participate in making them reality, and to work with all those remarkable people who Joe found around. And when he found us, he then molded us into a smiling, ah shucksing, Spartan-like team that, we felt, could do just about anything. It took five years of pestering Joe to get him to hire me, but boy did he make the wait worthwhile.

And he was so right...Luck does not ride on the back of donkeys.”

—Scott Walker



“In September 1991, just after the Russian coup d’etat attempt in August, Joe supported me to accompany Ted Saito, then SPIE Vice President, to travel to Russia to dedicate our Moscow chapter in the Kremlin and to visit SPIE’s Minsk chapter as well as Russian colleagues in St. Petersburg who were interested in forming an SPIE chapter there. This trip, which I negotiated with Joe after being able to secure a matching National Science Foundation (NSF) grant of \$1000 to help support my travel costs, was the education of a lifetime for me, and I was always grateful to him for supporting my participation. The trip was nothing I could have imagined..on a spectrum of incredibly stressful to warm and delightful gatherings in people’s homes for whom securing food to entertain was a real hardship during those times. It was on this trip at a conference in St. Petersburg that I met M.J Soileau, one of my favorite SPIE colleagues who became a collaborator on SPIE’s first NSF grant and a future SPIE President, and formed other friendships with Henri Arsenault and Duncan Moore who were traveling to Russia for the first time.

As is sprinkled throughout the 50 Years of SPIE Anniversary book, Joe repeatedly “took a chance” on new meetings, new hires, new projects and ideas. His willingness to support staff in gaining professional education through experience was one of the reasons, I believe, that so many of us stayed employed there for so long. His willingness to explore and invest in new frontiers and people is the basis for the Society’s ongoing success. Joe gave me many many opportunities and chances... one of his favorite sayings, “Stick with me, Baby, I’ll make you a star!!” comes to mind. I will always remember Joe with admiration and fondness.

—Janice Gaines Walker

“I had just attended my first SPIE event in Florida and was seated close to Joe on the plane ride to Seattle. On a few occasions, he leaned back to ask me how things went so of course, I gave him a few of my impressions. Little did I know that would open up another 45 minutes of conversation on the ride from Seattle to Bellingham when Joe traded seats with someone so he could quiz me more. That short ride gave me a glimpse into Joe’s enthusiasm for SPIE and a better understanding of the foundation he built—one in which we continue to thrive!

—Bonnie Peterson



“The sign outside Joe’s office read, “Don’t confuse motion with action.” Joe lived by those words, making things happen and endeavoring to make everyone involved feel a part of those things and feel good about what they were doing. By nature he was humble yet a warrior, visceral yet canny. He was fearless in his vision, his leadership, and his willingness to take risks. We followed him across the Rubicon because he believed, and so did we. Taking that journey with Joe taught me many things about life, work, and people. What a privilege it was, and is, to be part of what Joe helped to forge.

—Eric Pepper



“When I ran into Joe Yaver in the laundry room of our Palos Verdes condominiums in 1972, I had no idea that it would change the entire direction of my personal and professional life. My goal was to continue teaching special education and music in California after years of education and training. Instead, I was hired to negotiate for meeting space and work “deals” with hotels around the nation that would benefit this struggling, almost bankrupt organization called Society of Photo Optical Instrumentation Engineers.

Moving from Palos Verdes to Bellingham created issues for me because I had kids and a husband in California who couldn't just pull up stakes and move north. I was sure that Joe would replace me with some Washingtonian who was going to be closer to the office and after all, I wasn't a long-time employee with tenure! I suggested that perhaps I could stay in California where we had meetings on the calendar for a year while he found someone to take my position up north and we promised to talk about the terms of the end of my SPIE employment after the annual in San Diego. We never had that conversation and I continued to work remote for the next 37 years, thanks to Joe.

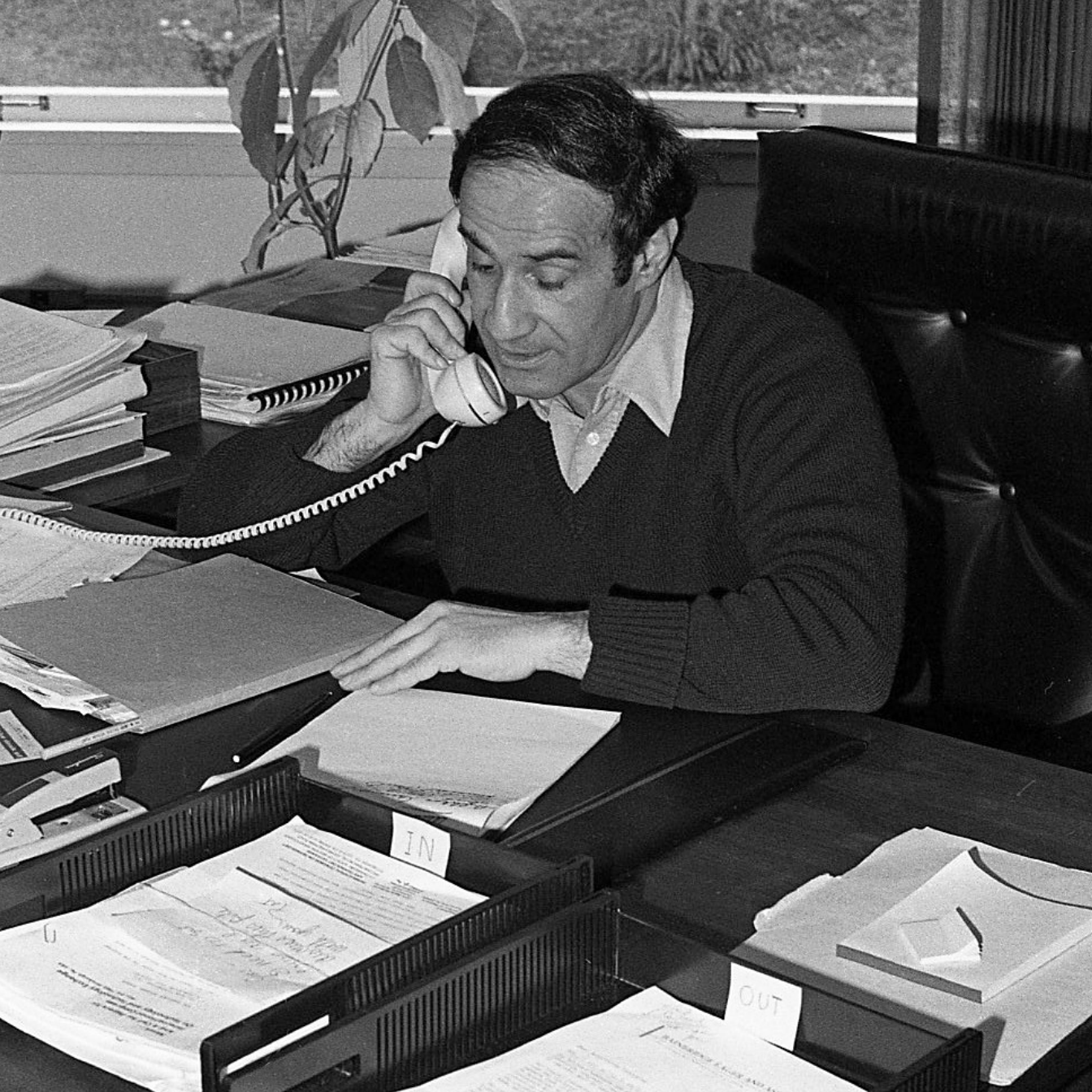
Joe was unique, kind, and “smart as a whip”. His Brooklyn “street sense” allowed him to take chances and live with the consequences, never looking back. He often floated an idea that was not supported by most and turned it into a victory for the organization. His ability to create partnerships was amazing and I personally saw him work his magic with Teddi Lauren, Roger Schneider,



Moe Levitt the BRH and the OSA. The OPTCON experiment was a perfect example of a partnership based upon respect, respect for Joe Yaver and the organization he had built from the ground up. He didn't really support the multi organization concept, but went along because he knew it could benefit SPIE. He and Anita lived SPIE, dawn to dusk and truly laid the framework for the success of the organization today. Thank you Joe.

I will miss hearing his voice, asking how CLEO is doing or reliving OPTCON with me while Anita patiently waits in the background for her chance to talk. Joe was one of a kind, a wonderful kind and he will be missed by so many who came to respect and love that guy from Brooklyn.

—Sue Davis



EXCERPTED FROM

From Photography to Photonics—Fifty Years of SPIE 1955–2005

Being SPIE's Executive Director

by **Joseph Yaver**



Agnete and Joe Yaver

When the position of executive director of SPIE was offered to me in November of 1969, I was really quite “clueless” as to the unique nature of this organization—its diverse membership and shaky financial structure at the time. I had no doubt that the people charged with its future were dedicated and meant to build a professional and responsive organization. Clearly, they were proud of what they had thus far achieved. But times were tough. Individual and government budgets had been severely cut, affecting membership travel and general support for societies. On top of that the organization was still nascent and defining itself and its future. Being somewhat impulsive, I took the job, and the challenges that went with it.

SPIE introduced me to a world that was destined to be one of the great enabling technologies of the century. It provided me with an opportunity to meet many of the leading figures in one of mankind’s greatest achievements—the exploration of space. It was an honor to meet such leading figures as Harold “Doc” Edgerton, Rudolf Kingslake, Brian Thompson, Lewis Larmore, and many of the builders and leaders



Joe Yaver and many SPIE leaders of the time at the 1983 dedication of the new SPIE headquarters in Bellingham.

of the smaller companies that largely made up the field of “photo-optics,” as it was often called back then, and a privilege to have had the participation and guidance of committed members like John Kiel, Chuck DeMund, and many others.

Among the highlights of my career at SPIE was to meet one of the early astronauts, Walter Cunningham, who came to our Annual Meeting in Anaheim with a piece of the moon. Another unforgettable moment was having noted author Ray Bradbury, who was the guest speaker at our Annual Meeting, announce that his dream was to “fall through space with George Bernard Shaw,” one of the writers I most admire.

Ken Mattingly and Henry Hartsfield, Jr., astronauts who flew the Shuttle Columbia, which had a large number of optical experiments, presented us with patches from their uniforms at one SPIE Annual Meeting. That particular meeting was tied to a retrospective of work of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in advancing the capture of images in space and their transmission to a spellbound audience on Earth.

I was proud to be part of SPIE’s pioneering endeavor to build bridges to the scientific communities in



SPIE Staff 1983.

Europe and Asia, and to be the first American-based technical society to establish a chapter and office in what was then the Soviet Union, under Mikhail Gorbachev.

To meet and break bread with such luminaries as Aden and Marjorie Meinel and various Nobel laureates were of course memorable experiences.

One of the more dismaying moments of my tenure at SPIE was the collision with the U.S. Department of Defense on the presentation of papers at SPIE conferences during the Cold War, which they viewed as being too sensitive for presentation at open scientific and technical meetings. It was a significant challenge for all of the technical community to find ways to adjust to the government's position and yet to stay true to our mission as an organization fostering the free exchange of information and ideas.

Picking up the first proof copy from the Los Angeles Airport of our newly renamed journal, *Optical Engineering*, left a lasting impression on me. I remember traveling there at 10 o'clock at night to receive it from the printer who was located in South Dakota. It was a very proud moment which was celebrated with a bottle of champagne.

An important turn in our fortune occurred when we met Dr. Roger Schneider, who was at that time the director of the Center for Devices and Radiological Health. He asked us if we would be interested in running a meeting on medical imaging that they would essentially support, because he thought SPIE was the group that could best attract the cross-disciplinary audience he wanted to bring together. We agreed and that was the beginning of the Medical Imaging meeting.

When we moved our headquarters from L.A. to Bellingham, Washington, in 1977, we rented space at Lairmont Manor, a mansion and office annex with an interesting history. Built by a local railroad tycoon, it had later served as an orphanage and convent. But as the field of optics took off, we outgrew our Lairmont space and were in a position to build our own facility. I was proud to be associated with the design and construction of the new SPIE Headquarters in Bellingham. It was a sunny, beautiful day in June for the new building's dedication in 1983. We had an assemblage of members drawn from the Society's pioneering days as well as the current times under the leadership of SPIE President Warren Smith. We were all dancing on moondust celebrating the fact that we had put a permanent roof over SPIE's head, and helping to ensure its future.

The other lasting impression I have is that running SPIE was like operating on a bucking horse—it never stands still, which is its strength and its challenge to anyone fortunate enough to hold the reins.

Over the years each SPIE President brought a different flavor to the Society during their tenure. It was like getting remarried every year. The Society enjoyed a cornucopia of leadership talent and we seemed to always have the right man at the right time, which tended to make this executive director look a lot better than he was.

Something that made SPIE truly unique over the years has been our ability to bring people together, to attract people who would not normally meet anywhere else and to foster cross-fertilization across disciplines and interests. The interaction and synergy at our meetings was vibrant and stimulating.



Joe Yaver and Warren Smith at the 1983 dedication of the SPIE headquarters.

Thinking back on this, I would be remiss in not acknowledging the contributions of my wonderful wife, Agnete, who skillfully led us through the international areas of culture and language, when she served as the manager of the international secretariat.

I believe there will always be a place for a nimble organization that addresses the technical community's need to know and be recognized for its achievements. Unquestionably SPIE is riding one of the great technical chariots of the future. It can't miss.



Joe's remarks at SPIE's 50th Anniversary celebration at the Town & Country in San Diego, 2005

Thank you, Brian; following you is like following Winston Churchill in The House of Commons. You know you are going to be a loser.

I hope, everyone will forgive me for appearing a little nervous. This always happens when I am not personally in charge of everything.

Naturally, before I agreed to get up here, Anita asked me what I would talk about. I told her I would talk about my mistakes. She said, "Joe, you know you only have a couple of minutes!"

I am particularly delighted to see so many of my former bosses in one room. I think it proves you can survive Joe Yaver. John Kiel is a good example. I recall when he told me; "Joe, I don't understand why and what you are doing, but whatever you're doing, keep doing it. It was a great vote of confidence. Thanks, Jack.

This evening also brings back a flood of memories. I remember when Dino Pongeggi who was vice president in 1969 met me at the San Francisco Airport on my way for an initial interview in Los Angeles. Dino asked me what I thought my qualifications were for the job. I told him I'd always been involved in desperate enterprises. He replied; "That's exactly what we're looking for."

Desperate was not far from the truth. The Society's financial situation was indeed precarious. It had a negative net worth, a poor cash flow, and was operating in the teeth of a major downturn in the aerospace and defense industry from which it drew much of its sustenance. But it had an enduring asset, a group of dedicated and resolute volunteers who were believers in its future and were willing to roll the dice with a clueless executive director.

I recall that in 1970 our straits were so dire that our treasurer, John Kiel, insisted to the dismay of our president that we call the annual meeting off. That was not a good day.

Clearly the Society needed to broaden its scope and usefulness. Out of necessity and with the good fortune of not having too many predispositions we adopted a complicated strategy of ganging together our specialized meetings.

Identifying timely technical subjects, promoting and staging larger focused events was indeed a challenge. In fact, running the Society became more akin to being the ringmaster of an intellectual circus than being a traditional administrator.

Looking back, one of the benefits of having "hard bread to bite on" was developing, as my father said: "strong teeth." SPIE became an organization willing to take a chance on new people and ideas and most important encourage and support a creative staff, many of whom sit among you tonight. Thanks, gang, for making me look good.

Now I have been asked to share my insights as to what SPIE would be like in 50 and even 100 years. I must confess that my qualifications in this area are a little shaky. For example I really believed one fiber optics guru, who told me in 1978 that fiber optics was not worth pursuing as a useful subject. Another guru in early 1980s swore on bibles that if we spent \$100,000 on new computers we would within three months be a paperless office.

To make matters worse I believed the chair of a National Academy of Sciences meeting in Washington, DC which was addressing our collusion with DOD that all discussions would be absolutely confidential. Within five minutes of adjourning the meeting the New York Times was standing on the steps of the Academy demanding an interview.

In view of these lapses I felt I needed some help, so I read tealeaves, looked as Julius Caesar did at the entrails of eagles, studied voodoo, and checked out Bill Wolfe's crystal ball, and concluded that SPIE will still be the same old story. People will physically want to meet, want to know what is happening, insure that they will not be left out, and be recognized for their contributions and achievements.

To serve these compelling human needs there will be an organization which in our little universe is called a Society. My able successors, who you will now hear from, I have no doubt will be more insightful, but they should keep in mind Cicero's speech to the Roman Senate: "It seems to me that no soothsayer should be able to look at another soothsayer without laughing."

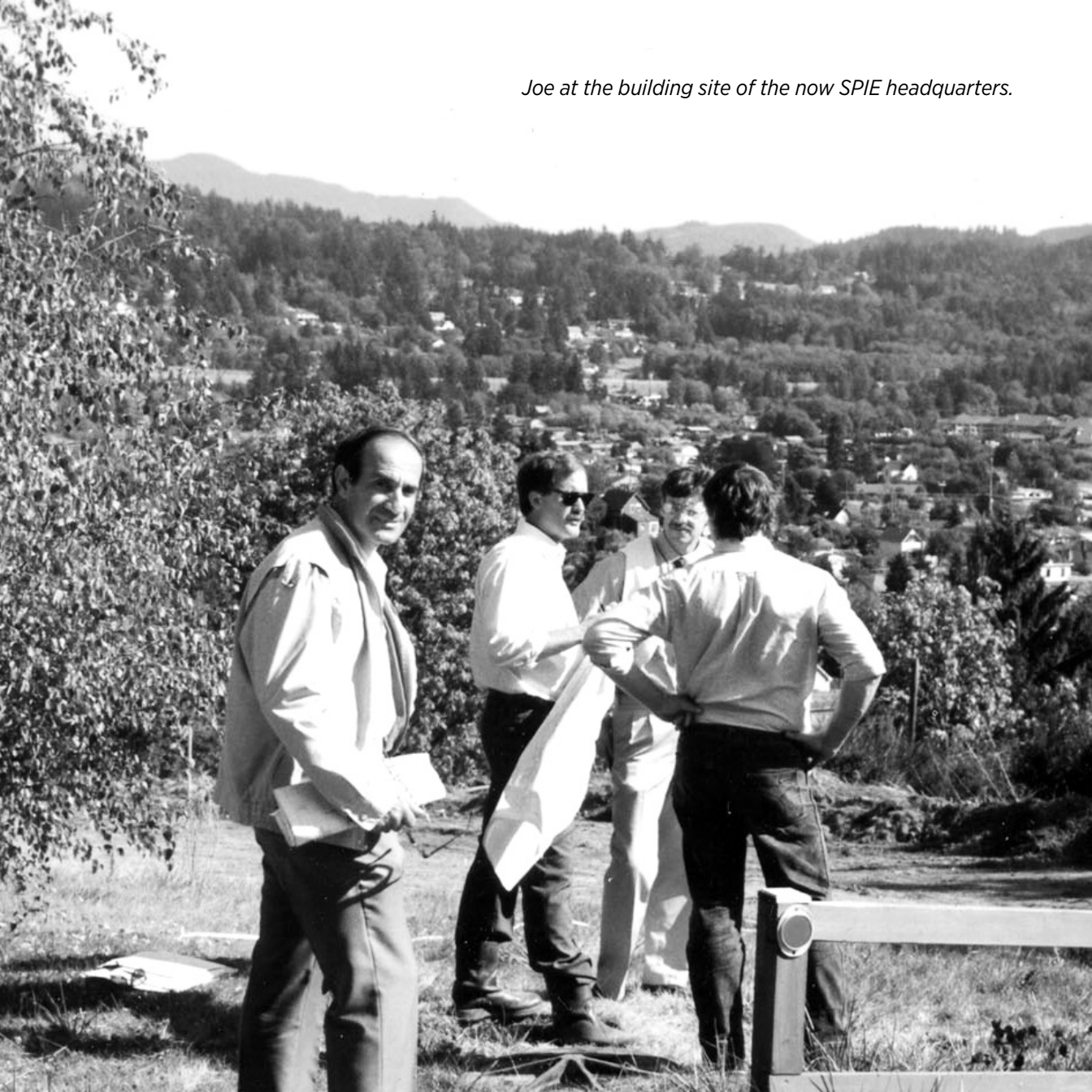
Thank you everybody for giving me an opportunity for "a last hurrah" and for helping keep the dream alive.

Joseph Yaver





Joe at the building site of the now SPIE headquarters.





SPLE
BY G. ENZ

SPIE is the international society for optics and photonics

CONNECTING MINDS.
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ABOUT SPIE

SPIE is the international society for optics and photonics, an educational not-for-profit organization founded in 1955 to advance light-based science and technology. The Society serves nearly 264,000 constituents from approximately 166 countries, offering conferences and their published proceedings, continuing education, books, journals, and the SPIE Digital Library in support of interdisciplinary information exchange, professional networking, and patent precedent. SPIE provided more than \$4 million in support of education and outreach programs in 2017.

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