



John D. Taylor

JOHN J. TAYLOR

1922–2013

Elected in 1974

*“Contributions to the application of theoretical methods
to nuclear shield and reactor design.”*

BY WILLIAM J. PERRY

JOHN JOSEPH TAYLOR, a pioneer in nuclear energy and former vice president of Westinghouse and the Electric Power Research Institute, died on December 9, 2013, at the age of 91.

John was born in Hackensack, New Jersey, on February 27, 1922. He graduated from St. John’s College in 1942 and went on to serve as a Lieutenant (jg) in the Navy. After his naval service he did graduate work at Notre Dame, where he was awarded a master’s degree in mathematics in 1947. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from St. John’s College in 1947. On leaving college he went into the nuclear industry and never looked back, making his mark as a world leader in that field and the related field of electric power.

He started his career in nuclear power with the Kellex Corporation, but in 1952 moved to the Westinghouse Electric Corporation, where he held a series of increasingly responsible positions in nuclear power, in time becoming the vice president and general manager responsible for the corporation’s nuclear power plant business. During this period Westinghouse became one of the preeminent companies in the world in the field of nuclear power.

During his career at Westinghouse John had management positions, in turn, for the development of nuclear reactors for naval submarines, reactors for commercial electric

generating plants, and breeder reactors. In short, he held senior management responsibilities for some of the most critical nuclear programs in our nation during the Cold War. As John approached the mandatory retirement age for senior managers at Westinghouse, he was the general manager for all of Westinghouse's commercial nuclear power plants, and he was not ready to retire.

So in 1981, after a remarkably distinguished career spanning 31 years, he left Westinghouse and went to the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) in Palo Alto, California, where he became the vice president of nuclear power. He served at EPRI for another 14 years, retiring in 1995 at the age of 73. When John was at Westinghouse, he focused on the technology and management of nuclear reactors; at EPRI he drew on his broad background to explore policy implications of nuclear energy. A typical product of his EPRI work was the paper "Reactor Accidents: A Global Reassessment of Consequences," one of several dozen papers he wrote while at EPRI—in addition to the more than 30 technical papers he authored or coauthored on technical aspects of nuclear reactors while at Westinghouse.

While John's career in the nuclear reactor field was quite broad, it is fair to say that he was especially preeminent in the field of nuclear safety and efficiency, including the safe disposal of excess plutonium. Indeed, he was probably the leading American in this field and was internationally known for his seminal analysis of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident. His outstanding work in the nuclear safety field led him to be nominated for the prestigious Enrico Fermi award, as well as the Smythe award.

During his long and distinguished career, he was honored with many awards, including the Walter H. Zinn Award (American Nuclear Society), the George Westinghouse Gold Medal (American Society of Mechanical Engineers), and the Order of Merit (Westinghouse Electric Corporation). He was elected to the National Academy of Engineering, a fellow of the American Nuclear Society and American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a member of the American Physical Society. He served on many committees of the NAE

and the National Research Council, and was chair of the Electric Power/Energy Systems Engineering Section. He served as an unpaid consultant to the International Atomic Energy Agency and to several US government agencies, including the Department of Energy, and often testified to the Congress.

John's modesty belied a lifetime of remarkable achievement serving his country. His career of achievement in more than 50 years in nuclear design, nuclear safety, and nuclear policy is unique in the world. But beyond the overachiever was a warm and generous human being. He was a caring friend to many of us, but was most at home with his family, to whom he was entirely devoted. Lorraine, his beloved wife of 67 years, died several years before John.

He is survived by a son and daughter-in-law, John B. and Allyn Taylor, a daughter and son-in-law, Nancy T. and Paul Gray, a daughter and son-in-law, Susan and Paul DeMuro, as well as six grandchildren, one grandson-in-law, and two great-grandchildren. They will all miss him, as will his many friends; indeed, we will never see his like again.