



Ronald W. Potter

March 9, 1932 - October 15, 2020

Ronald W. Potter passed from this life on Oct. 15, 2020 at his home in Joplin, Missouri.

Born to Juan and Vera (Wormington) Potter March 9, 1932 he grew up as a farm boy in Carthage, Missouri. Ron always knew farm life was not for him, getting in trouble for plowing across rows in the family fields when distracted by theories, or for using the side of the barn as his own personal black board for solving equations. In 1949 he graduated from Carthage High School and left the farm for the University of Illinois where he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering.

With his first degree under his belt, he entered the Army as a Second Lieutenant and served his tour at the National Security Agency in Arlington, Virginia. He went home just long enough to find the one thing he missed about those fields, the young woman who used to bring him chocolate chip cookies. He was united in marriage to Ruth Swearingen on May 29, 1955 at Mt. Moriah Church in Carthage, Missouri.

When his tour was complete they relocated to Los Angeles, California where Ron joined Hughes Aircraft and attended USC where he earned his Masters in 1958. He then joined Hewlett-Packard (HP) in Palo Alto, California and continued his education at Stanford through the coursework for a doctorate. Math and engineering were a way of life for Ron. While at HP he did ground breaking work on Fourier Transforms that helped pave the way for modern computers, and on long range navigation data that has shaped what we now

know as GPS. HP used his algorithms and equations to create a number of precision instruments and Ron achieved 9 patents during those years. Even at home, engineering was a way of life. He had an intense love of classical music and engineered custom speakers that best matched the combination of his available space and the existing technology. His love for stargazing and photography led him to build his own observatory, complete with a star tracker that enabled astrophotography. His work was published several times in Sky and Telescope. Ron always had a file drawer of problems he was solving just because they were interesting.

In 1987 Ron took early retirement from HP to travel the United States in an RV while he indulged in his passions for bird watching, genealogy, and cruising to see Total Eclipses. He also wrote two books on precision mathematics.

Ronald Potter is survived by his wife of 65 years Ruth Swearingen Potter and their two sons, Michael (and wife Pamela) of Alexandria, VA and Stephen of Woodinville, WA; two grandsons, Christopher (and wife Jessica) and David of WA; and three great grandchildren; his brother Larry (and wife Jane) of Carthage, 1st cousins Elliott (and wife Jacqui) of Carthage, Pat Witt, and Lucy Powelson of Kansas City, and several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents Juan and Ruth Potter of Carthage and sister Ronda Mote of Houston, TX.

Cremation will be by Midland of Joplin with a Celebration of Life at Mt. Moriah Methodist Church on May 29, 2021 at 2pm. with burial of ashes at Park Cemetery afterwards.

Donations can be made to the Mt. Moriah Church building fund, 15506 Nutmeg Road, Carthage, Mo. 64836

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAY **29**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (cst)

Mt. Moriah Methodist Church

Tribute Wall

RL

“ I sat next to Ron at HP (building 52U) as a recent engineering graduate. I learned many things from Ron. He had a unique way on encouraging and educating people while still remaining humble and receptive. Years later, I had the pleasure of consulted with Ron at different companies around the Bay Area, it was always a fun and learning experience. I remember Ron's fantastic stereo system built in under his house in Saratoga. His telescope and cold camera with star tracker. Ron's passing certifiably places a void in my heart. My condolences to his family.

Bob Lanza

Robert Lanza - February 24, 2021 at 12:29 PM

BR

“ I worked with Ron at HP in Lake Stevens many years ago. I was one of a large group of computer engineers and scientists hired to do the massive amounts of coding anticipated for planned new large scale products. Ron was extremely helpful to me and other new hires who had little to no knowledge of Fourier transforms and DSP technology. He took many of us under his wing and provided "FFT & DSP 101" intro for newbies in a kind and positive style which was much appreciated! I'm sorry to hear of his passing as he was a generous and giving guy. His family and close friends have my deepest sympathy at his loss. Definitely one in a million!

Barb Rider - November 05, 2020 at 10:22 AM

MF

“ Ron was highly lauded and appreciated by those of us that supported the DSA products in the field. As a new HP employee I remember him patiently and clearly explaining the difference between auto-correlation and cross-correlation to me. For us support engineers Ron was our secret weapon when confronted with a difficult to solve customer problem. He was always happy to help, easy to talk to and full of ideas. His contributions to HP and its people are legend. He is now “transforming” to a new domain. Fairs winds, Ron.

-Mic Fite

Retired Systems Engineering Organization, HP/Agilent

Mic Fite - November 04, 2020 at 01:14 PM

MR

“ I must still have someplace in my collection of memorabilia the picture of a starry night sky Ron once took from his observatory in Saratoga. He watched the stars. He followed the stars. He was a star and made our world better while he lived in it.

Mia Rode - October 27, 2020 at 03:30 PM