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Top Stories

Saluting the Career of a DoD Corrosion Leader

A Profile of Dick Kinzie

By Chris Grethlein

The progress made to date in the DoD's fight against corrosion would not have been possible without the vision, leadership, and energy of a group of dedicated individuals. Thus it is with some sadness, but mostly with admiration, that we note the recent retirement of one of these pillars of the corrosion community, Richard C. (Dick) Kinzie.

Dick's career spans more than four decades in both commercial and government sectors, most of it spent combating corrosion in one or more of its forms. Having graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in Chemical Engineering in 1965, Dick spent much of his early career in industry, developing and manufacturing coatings and corrosion inhibitors for a variety of applications.

In 1984, he joined the Air Force Corrosion Prevention and Control Office (AFCPCO) as a materials engineer. During his tenure, Dick was pivotal in the development and implementation of materials and processes for new aircraft design, and in quantifying the cost of corrosion on military assets. He was a leader in managing corrosion as a structural integrity issue in aging aircraft, environmental monitoring, and corrosion maintenance practices and their impact.

After 22 years with the Air Force, Dick Kinzie retired as the AFCPCO's Deputy Office Chief. Dick was a tireless advocate for corrosion awareness and prevention within the Air Force. Beyond his technical prowess, Dick had an ability to work through the bureaucracy to get projects started, noted Bill Abbott, Senior Research Scientist at Battelle Columbus. Much of the innovative flight test work currently underway in the Air Force would never have been implemented without his efforts, Abbott said. His service was not limited to the Air Force alone, as he developed successful working relationships with his counterparts in the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, and NASA as well.

His long string of achievements includes several patents and numerous publications. What may be more impressive yet is that for a man of his stature and accomplishments, he remained approachable to colleagues and subordinates, and available to all who sought his time and sage advice. His relaxed manner and charm made him easy to talk to, and he was always happy to strike up a conversation with anybody who sought one.

Maj. Robert Reed, Chief of the AFCPCO, cited two of Dick's many accomplishments as major legacies he will leave behind. First, Dick crafted a methodology for capturing the costs of corrosion for the USAF, having completed four successive studies in 1990, 1997, 2001, and 2004. "Every time he got a little smarter and went back and revised his prior studies," Major Reed said. "Anyone who knows a little about this process would know it's not easy, since corrosion costs are not specifically identified in our financial systems. This program was so successful that it was used as the



baseline for capturing the DoD's Cost of Corrosion."

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Maj. Robert Reed, Chief of the Air Force Corrosion Prevention and Control Office

Secondly, Major Reed noted that Dick has helped the Air Force's view of corrosion evolve from a reactive one, where corrosion was seen as a maintenance problem, toward a more strategic and proactive view, where corrosion prevention techniques are employed to reduce maintenance costs. "He was thinking in terms of conditioned-based maintenance before it was popular. If everyone on the DoD corrosion initiative had the vision and energy Dick had, we'd have this corrosion problem whipped!"

Fran Duntz at the Air Force's Electronics Systems Center echoed these sentiments. "Dick is the most knowledgeable individual I've ever met on corrosion. I could call him anytime as our go-to guy! Dedicated and enthusiastic, he always made himself available for corrosion issues and technology assessments, regardless of program size. He always found ways to reach solutions and tackle the obstacles that lay in the program manager's way. He'll always be remembered as AFMC's 'supreme corrosion fighter.' His talents and courage will be sorely missed."

Above all, Dick was a catalyst for change in how the Air Force and the DoD viewed corrosion. Those of us who worked with him and learned from him felt privileged for the opportunity. We salute Dick and wish him well in his future endeavors.