



November 20, 2023

Richard E. Toohey, September 2, 1945 – November 13, 2023

In Memoriam



The NCRP family is deeply saddened by the passing of Richard Toohey. Dr. Toohey was a gentle giant in radiation science and a towering personality in life. He was brilliant and humble, kind and compassionate, wise and diligent, innovative and trustworthy, thoughtful and steadfast, and a friend to all of us. His accomplishments are legion from the study of radium dial painters to the Million Person Study. His leadership and mentoring were extensive and lasting, nationally with NCRP and internationally with the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA).

Dr. Toohey received his PhD in Physics from the University of Cincinnati in 1973. He started his career at Argonne National Laboratory and continued as a Senior Health Physicist until 1993 when he joined Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU). At ORAU he managed programs in internal dosimetry, dose reconstruction, environmental health physics, and radiological emergency response, retiring in 2012. At the time of his death, Dr. Toohey was a Consulting Health Physicist with M.H. Chew and Associates.

Dr. Toohey was a Certified Health Physicist, President of the Health Physics Society (2008 to 2009), Treasurer of IRPA (2008 to 2019), and Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee for the U.S. Transuranium and Uranium Registries (2015 to 2018). He received the 2019 Health Physics Society Distinguished Scientific Achievement Award, had over 140 publications, and was a retired Lt. Colonel, U.S. Army Reserve.

Dr. Toohey was first elected to the NCRP Council in 2006 and became a Distinguished Emeritus Member in 2018. He served on the Board of Directors (2010 to 2016), and on the Budget and Finance Committee (2006 to 2015)—his financial acuity led to his much appreciated service as Chair (2007 to 2015). Dr. Toohey was Chair of the 2012 Annual Meeting Program Committee, and Co-Chair in 2016.

Dr. Toohey was the 2016 Warren K. Sinclair Keynote Speaker and spoke on “WARP: Where Are the Radiation Professionals?.” He was Co-Chair of Council Committee 2 (CC 2) on Meeting the Needs of the Nation for Radiation Protection. During his tenure with NCRP, he was Co-Chair of Scientific Committee (SC) 6-9; Staff Consultant for the Million Person Study; and a Member of SC 6-3, SC 6-4, SC 6-9, SC 57-17, and WARP. He was advisor to the NCRP’s Fifth President (John D. Boice, Jr.) from 2012 to 2018.

Dr. Boice recalls relying on Dr. Toohey as a trustworthy advisor. They spoke frequently on topics to enhance the NCRP leadership in radiation protection, notably the WARP initiative, renewed strength in occupational and internal dosimetry, holding program area committee meetings before each annual meeting, rapidly publishing annual meeting summaries in *Health Physics News*, and creating CC 2. Dr. Toohey worked tirelessly with Dr. Boice, under the radar, and produced! He was fond of comparing himself with Ado Annie (in the musical Oklahoma) as being the feller “who can’t say no.” To our great fortune, Dr. Toohey continued “never saying no” and enriched our lives personally and professionally for so many years. Rest in peace old friend!

Dick and his wife Beverly were avid supporters of Smoky Mountain Service Dogs. In lieu of flowers, donations could be made at <https://www.smokymountainservicedogs.org/>.