In Memoriam

Watts Humphrey
4 July 1927–28 October 2010

One of the true pioneers of the software engineering discipline passed away this past October. Watts Humphrey had a truly remarkable career during which he developed or contributed to the Personal Software Process, Team Software Process, and Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) framework, among many other contributions.

Having met Watts from time to time at meetings and workshops, I still find it hard to believe that his energy and sharp insights will be missing from the room at future events. Luckily for us, he left behind many books, technical papers, and other contributions that will continue to speak for him. Many colleagues (including IEEE Software board members and authors) who knew Watts have documented some of their memories below and on our website (www.computer.org/watts). We invite you to reminisce with them and contribute some of your own. —Forrest Shull, editor in chief

Some excerpts:

Watts Humphrey was a direct, honest, principled, disciplined man with a great intuition for software development and management. He brought serious attention to the software process and made it a legitimate field of study. His creation of the Personal Software Process (PSP) and Team Software Process (TSP) epitomized the idea of learning by doing. PSP was a hard sell as it requires strong discipline, something rare but that Watts had in abundance. He persisted and evolved the concepts based upon application and empirical study and made an enormous contribution to software engineering. He lives on in his books and his ideas. It was my great pleasure to know him, dialogue with him, and be influenced by him.

—Victor Basili,
University of Maryland and Fraunhofer Center, Maryland

Just a few months before he passed away, I had the singular privilege of conducting an extensive, multiday oral history of Watts on behalf of the Computer History Museum. … Watts’ wife sat in for most of the interview, and I admired her patience, but observing their interaction as she helped him with dates and added to some of the stories, it was clear that here was a playful and loving man, although most of us know only his technical face. I shall miss him.

—Grady Booch,
IBM Research and IEEE Software editorial board

Watts clearly supplied integrated measures of vision, innovation, and implementation that have seldom been seen. The tangible results from his career bear testimony to his voluminous contribution. He will be sorely missed but also left behind a platform from which the future can sustainably continue to benefit and prosper. From that perspective, he continues to influence us all and, I suspect, those who will follow after us. Such is the legacy of Watts Humphrey.

—Doug Vogel,
City University of Hong Kong and IEEE Software advisory board