



## A Tribute to Professor Jean G. Van Bladel

Chalmers M. Butler, Alumni Distinguished Professor, Emeritus  
Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29631, [chalmers.butler@gmail.com](mailto:chalmers.butler@gmail.com)

Jean Van Bladel was born in Antwerp, Belgium, on July 4, 1924. Though his university education was interrupted by service in the Belgian Armed Forces during WWII, he earned the Electromechanical Engineer and the Radio Engineer degrees from Brussels University, Belgium, in 1947 and 1949, respectively, and the MS (1949) and Ph.D. (1950) degrees in Electrical Engineering from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA. After his Ph.D., he returned to Belgium in 1950 to become the Head of the *Radar Department of Manufacture Belge de Lampes et de Matériel Electronique* in Brussels. Four years later he accepted an associate professorship in Electrical Engineering at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, after which in 1956 he joined the Electrical Engineering faculty as an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA, rising shortly thereafter to full professor. There he also served as a consultant with the particle accelerator project of the Midwestern Universities Research Association. In 1964 Professor Van Bladel returned to Belgium as the (founding) Director of the Electromagnetics and Acoustics Laboratory at Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium, which he soon developed into a major, and widely recognized, institution whose scope and depth increased over the years as demand dictated. In addition, Professor Van Bladel found time to serve Ghent University as Dean of the Faculty of Applied Sciences and for six years as a member of the University Board. A casual observer might think that leadership in URSI, especially during General Assemblies, was part of Professor Van Bladel's university responsibilities. This was not the case but, indeed, in 1964 he was elected Secretary General of URSI in which position he served for ten years.

Professor Van Bladel was an internationally recognized leader in radio science with a record of remarkable achievement, especially in those areas of fundamental engineering and science upon which radio science is founded. His numerous journal papers and books are valued resources for other researchers and for the advanced student and sophisticated practitioner. He is the author of *Les Applications du Radar al Astronomie et ala Meteorologie* (Gauthier-Villars, Paris, 1955), *Relativity and Engineering* (Springer-Verlag, Berlin, 1984), *Singular Electromagnetic Fields and Sources* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991; reprinted by IEEE Press, Piscataway, 1995), *Electromagnetic Fields* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1964; reprinted by Hemisphere, New York, 1985). A greatly expanded second edition of *Electromagnetic Fields* was published in 2007 by IEEE Press. In this second edition of 1100 pages, the topic coverage is expanded and many are treated in more depth than in the first edition. In particular, owing to the advances in computers and numerical techniques between 1964 and 2007, topics unheard of in 1964 find prominent places in the new edition.

Jean Van Bladel was a gentle man of integrity, of rare accomplishments, and with a deep sense of history and the arts. His fairness to others was complete. He was held in the highest regard by the engineering and scientific communities as attested to by the many honors bestowed upon him throughout his life: umerous awards, honorary and visiting professorships, memberships and positions in societies and organizations. Jean enjoyed life and induced a sense of happiness in those in his presence. Sadly, he left his family, friends, and colleagues on January 20, 2018.