

## MEMORIAL/TRIBUTE

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### A Tribute to John Lyman, PhD

John Lyman, PhD, a friend and visionary to the fields of prosthetics, orthotics, and rehabilitation engineering, died recently of cancer at his home in Sherman Oaks, California. He was 79 years old.

He was a futurist and an accomplished biomedical engineer before that name and “rehabilitation engineer” were coined. He worked in these fields, as well as others, at UCLA for more than 40 years before his retirement in 1996.

He was born in Santa Barbara, CA, lived in Sanger as a youngster, was educated as a psychologist and held three degrees in psychology from UCLA. Dr. Lyman worked in the LA aircraft industry doing research during World War II before joining the faculty at UCLA in 1947. He was solicited by Dean Boelter of the UCLA School of Engineering to help in developing improved upper-limb prostheses.

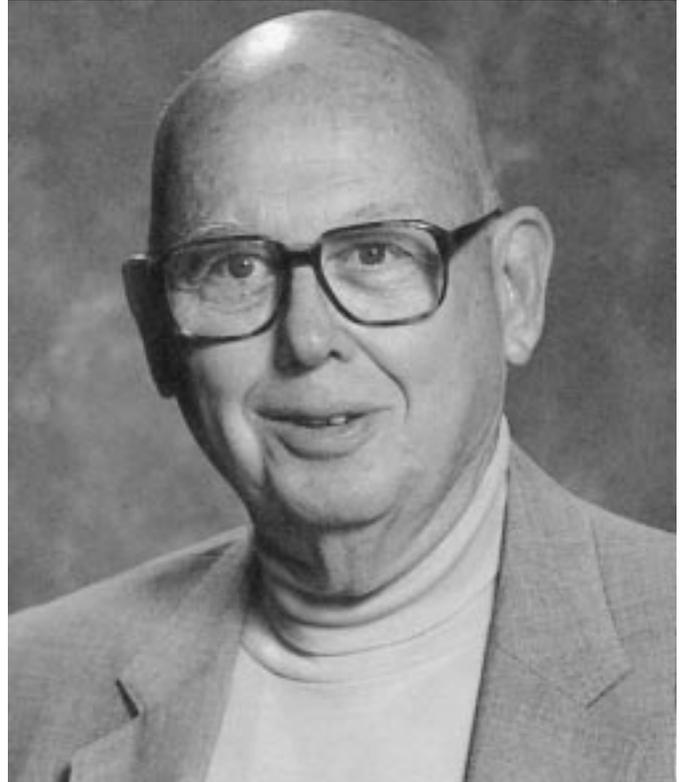
He worked at the Biotechnology Laboratory at UCLA since its inception in 1951 and became its head from 1958 to 1980. Then, from 1981 to 1996, he directed its successor, the Human-Machine-Environment Engineering Laboratory.

He is survived by his son John, his daughter Wendy, and his companion Dolores Yonker.

I have some specific memories about John.

Many of the PhD students he guided over the years at UCLA went on to start their own companies, and John found himself on the boards of directors of many of these companies. His creative thinking and entrepreneurial spirit helped instigate, promote, and support these new enterprises in the Los Angeles area. In essence, John Lyman was their granddaddy.

At a meeting 30 years ago, John was talking about putting computers in upper-limb prostheses. Some people thought him a visionary, others doubted what he was saying, and some thought he was crazy. Either way, his predictions have come true, including using



John Lyman, PhD, 1921–2001

computers so devices can “learn” as they are used.

After World War II, UCLA was a hotbed of basic research in upper-limb prosthetics, as UC Berkeley was in lower-limb prosthetics. This work was driven by the Army Surgeon General and the Veterans Administration in response to the poor prostheses being provided to amputee servicemen returning from the War. He worked with Craig Taylor and took over for him following Taylor’s death. John had an excellent library of the old reports of work at UCLA, many unpublished in prosthetics and orthotics journals. Following his retirement, he invited Julie Shaperman and me to visit and take what books we thought worthwhile for the field from his library. Most of those reports have been sent to Northwestern

University where Dr. Dudley Childress and his center have started a resource center and comprehensive library for the prosthetics and orthotics fields.

When I was working at the Committee on Prosthetics Research and Development (CPRD) at the National Academy of Sciences, John joined for a year on sabbatical leave from UCLA.

I had the pleasure of working daily with John for that time. He continued being a "teacher" to us on the staff there, and we became academically richer for the experience.

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