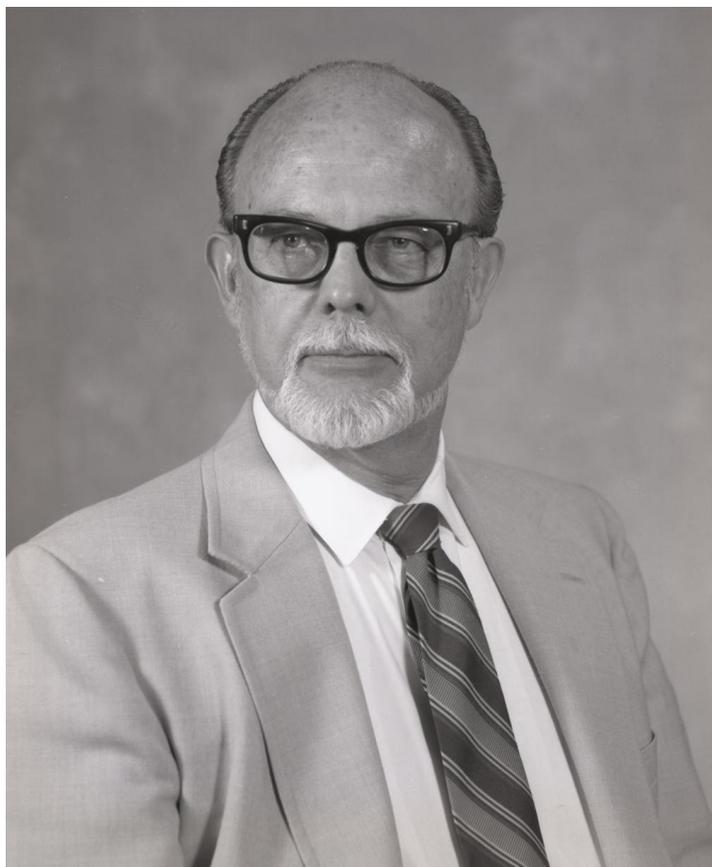


CELEBRATING 40 YEARS TOGETHER

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL PHYSICS

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



Frank Attix, PhD of the Department of Medical Physics (1987).

Frank Herbert Attix joined the Departments of Radiology and Human Oncology in 1976. Quickly taking a leadership role, Herb worked with Professor John Cameron in shepherding the creating of the Department of Medical Physics in 1981. Following Cameron's retirement, Herb Attix served as Chair of the Department of Medical Physics from 1985 – 1987 and was instrumental in solidifying the graduate and research programs that are now widely acclaimed throughout the university and United States.

Professor Attix is acknowledged as one of the world's experts in radiation dosimetry. His publications on measurement and interpretation of absorbed dose are considered seminal to this field.

The Origins of Radiation Dosimetry

This thirty year effort culminated in Attix's text "Introduction to Radiological Physics" (Wiley, New York), which is routinely used throughout the world as a text and reference book, and is recognized as the 'bible' of radiation physics. Attix also served as senior editor for the three volume set "Radiation Dosimetry" and the compendium "The Dosimetry of Ionizing Radiation" (Academic Press). These six volumes and text form the foundations of theory and measurement for the field of ionizing radiation interactions with matter. Herb was awarded the Distinguished Scientific Achievement Award from the Health Physics Society in 1987 and the prestigious William D. Coolidge Award by the American Association of Physicists in Medicine in 1994.

Born in Portland, Oregon in April 1925, Herb received an A.B. in Physics from the University of California, Berkeley, and an M.S. in Physics from the University of Maryland, College Park. During World War II, Attix served as a Lieutenant of the U.S. Navy. Subsequently, Herb joined Lauriston Taylor at the National Bureau of Standards where he invented and brought to routine use the "Attix" free air ionization chamber, which has served as the basis for x-ray dose determinations throughout the world. Joining the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) in 1958, Herb continued a leadership role in dosimetry measurements, serving as Head of the Dosimetry Branch, and collaborating with Professor Cameron and co-workers to make thermoluminescent dosimetry the world standard for personnel absorbed dose monitoring. At this time, he developed the fundamental theory of radiation dose metrology, that has become known as the Spencer-Attix cavity theory, and has formed the basis for the calibration of dosimeters by the National Institutes of Science and Technology and all other measurement standards institutions throughout the world. Moving from electrons and photons, Attix led the use of fast neutrons as an effective treatment of cancer, originally at NRL and eventually Wisconsin.

The tradition of invention and discovery continues at UW to this day, with the help of leadership and expertise from our current faculty. With the support of our alumni, our faculty and graduate students will continue our long-held reputation of being leaders in education and discovery in medical physics.

Have an interesting story from your time at UW?

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Department of Medical Physics
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1111 Highland Avenue, Room 1005
Madison, Wisconsin 53705



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