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James Walter (Jim) Warwick (1924–2013)

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Jim Warwick died on Thursday, June 20, 2013 in Fresno, California. He was 82.

James Walter (Jim) Warwick was one of the pioneers of low frequency radio astronomy. He was born in Toledo, Ohio on May 22, 1924 and died on June 20, 2013 in Fresno, California. After graduation from high school as class valedictorian he served in the U.S. Army Air Corp as a B29 radar bombardier in the South Pacific. Following his military service, Jim went to Harvard University where he received both his B.A., and M.A. degrees. In 1951 he obtained his Ph.D. degree, also from Harvard, under the supervision of Fred Whipple. His Ph.D. thesis on “Some Problems of Magnetic Stars” set the stage for the rest of Jim’s career to study to magnetic fields in the Sun and planets by means of their Very Low Frequency (VLF) radio emission.

Photo courtesy Legacy.com:
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/fresnobee/name/james-warwick-obituary?pid=165562549>

Jim spent time at the Harvard College Observatory’s Sacramento Peak Station in New Mexico, and then at the High Altitude Observatory in Boulder, Colorado, primarily working on radio and optical investigations of solar flares. In 1959, he used the radio signal from Sputnik I to infer the decay in its spin rate, and speculated that this resulted from a charge of 10,000 volts that the spacecraft received as it passed through the terrestrial auroral zone. In 1955 he joined the University of Colorado, where he founded the Department of Astrogeophysics. He remained at Colorado as a faculty member until his retirement in 1989.

Aside from his lifelong interest in solar astrophysics, Jim studied Jupiter’s decametric emission, and became the principal investigator for the Voyager I and II Planetary Radio Astronomy instrument, which studied the low frequency radio emission during flybys of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune to give the first indications that some of

these planets possess a magnetic field. Later in his career, Jim turned his scientific interests to the application of radiophysics to study terrestrial lightning, earthquakes and fundamental physics.

Jim was an active member of the I.A.U. Commission 40 on Radio Astronomy as well as Commission 12 on Solar Radiation. When not involved in radio astronomy, he enjoyed music, the ballet, art, the theater, and played the cello and clarinet and for the Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra.

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https://rahist.nrao.edu/warwick_bio-memoir.shtml