

A Biography of Jim Blattenberger, 1929-2000

By Thu Nguyen
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Cal Chapman (Left) and Jim Blattenberger (Right) during the construction of the Revelle Laboratory
Source: The Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics

James R. Blattenberger was born on December 20, 1929. He received his bachelor's degree in Business Administration at the University of Pittsburgh in 1952. He was employed for twenty years in the Southern California Aerospace Industry in the fields of Accounting and Contracts Administration. He worked in both military and commercial divisions of Aerospace companies including Douglas Aircraft, Lear Inc., Motorola Inc., Litton Industries, and General Dynamics. At Litton Industries, he served as the Head Contracts Negotiator for one year in the sale of Inertial Navigation Systems to Grumman Aircraft with an annual contract value of approximately \$150 million. At Motorola, he served as Controller of a division for three years and one year as acting General Manager. At General Dynamics, he served as Controller and Assistant Vice President of Finance for five years with annual revenues of \$3-20 million. He began working at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (Scripps) in 1972 as Business Manager for North Pacific Experiment Program (NORPAX), a ten year experiment funded jointly by the Office of Naval Research and National Science Foundation. By late 1975, he became the Manager of Facilities in the Scripps Director's Office for the next twenty years.

According to the Ancient Mariners Newsletter, he was known as “the serious intense watchdog and problem-solver” for many great building projects at SIO (Ancient Mariners Newsletter 2001).

At his office in room 104-B of the Scripps Building, Blattenberger coordinated activities between the Director’s office, Scripps operating departments, UCSD departments, various outside organizations and individuals relating to facilities, services, and space. He also managed the Scripps Refrigeration Shop, Marine Sciences Development and Outfitting Shop, and Scripps Support Shop.

As the Manager of Facilities and Services, his duties covered a spectrum of responsibilities. His primary function was to provide an interface between the Director’s office, other Scripps and UCSD departments, outside organizations, and individuals in matters relating to the acquisition and management of SIO facilities and services provided by others in their day to day operations (Blattenberger 1989). His work concentrated on new construction, renovations of existing buildings, and services including building maintenance, ground care, custodial services, parking, police, fire, phones, and other items necessary to keep the Scripps campus operating in a manner consistent with UCSD and Scripps research and teaching needs. He also managed other facilities including the refrigeration repair shop and two machine shops (Blattenberger 1989).

As a leader of his department, his staff included a number of specialists and assistants who contributed to his achievements at Scripps including Shirley A. Bentley, Gary M. Reynolds, Joe Shafranske, and Richard E. Warren. Bentley was his Administrative Assistant who worked directly with him in 104-A Scripps Building. Reynolds was the Senior Lab Mechanic who provided refrigeration repair services from a shop located in the main Scripps service yard. Shafranske was the Senior Lab Mechanic who oversaw the staff support shop. Warren was the Shop Superintendent in T-6333 south of the Director’s Office. He was in charge of the MSDO Shop and the Staff Support Shop that employed fourteen people and had reported to Blattenberger administratively.

Blattenberger provided direct supervision and administrative management to Gary Reynolds who operated the Scripps Refrigeration Repair Shop (Blattenberger 1989). Reynolds’ activities involved the repair and maintenance of all departmentally owned air conditioning and refrigeration systems that do not qualify for state funded maintenance services. Blattenberger also provided administrative management to Warren and the Marine Sciences Development and Outfitting Shop (MSDO) and the Staff Support Shop. The MSDO provided machine shop services to the Scripps Community on a recharge basis and the Staff Support Shop provided free training and assistance to Scripps graduate students and a “do it yourself” machine shop for Scripps researchers (Blattenberger 1989). When collaborating with Bentley, they provided a variety of services for the Scripps Director which included the involvement of the procurement of “specialized equipment, office furnishings, automobile and airplane maintenance, and facilities arrangements for special functions” such as celebration, dedications, and events for distinguished visitors (Blattenberger 1989).

The purpose of Blattenberger's department was primarily to provide communication and assistance between Scripps, UCSD departments, outside organizations and individuals in respect to alterations, construction, land and facilities use, assignment, maintenance, management, and security for all Scripps facilities except for ships (Blattenberger 1989). Blattenberger and his staff primarily worked with architects, engineers, consultants, and several on and off campus service organizations. They also collaborated and provided assistance "to many other campus groups on problems that ranged from burned out light bulbs to negotiation of unique leases for use of outside facilities" (Blattenberger 1989). He and his team prepared Project Planning Guides and other documentation needed for state funded Major and Minor Capital Improvements (Blattenberger 1989).

Through the many years as Manager of Facilities and Services, he showed dedication and commitment to his work and achievements at Scripps. He was very active and participated in many aspects of the development of Scripps and the university. He served as a member of, ex officio member of, or advisor to the following Scripps/UCSD committees:

1. Aquarium Museum Building Committee
2. Capital Outlay and Space Advisory Committee
3. Director's Space Advisory Committee
4. Marine Sciences Physical Planning Committee
5. Parking and Transportation Alternatives Advisory Committee
6. Pier Building Committee
7. SIO Ad Hoc Seawater System Committee
8. SIO Ad Hoc POSS Storage Facility Committee
9. SIO Ad Hoc Pier Committee
10. SIO conference and Visitors Center Building
11. UCSD Handicapped Access Committee

The duties and activities for these committees included meeting attendance, preparation and gathering of data and information, and the promotion of opinions and attitudes of the Scripps director, faculty, and staff with respect to the issues being considered (Blattenberger 1989). When new construction projects began, Blattenberger attended daily and weekly job meetings with the contractor, UCSD Design and Construction, Inspection, and other various players of the project in order to collaborate and interface as much as necessary in order to coordinate construction details with all Scripps departments, the building committee, and Scripps Administration that was affected (Blattenberger 1989). To name a few, these projects included the Scripps Conference and Visitors Center, Physical Oceanography and Space Science (POSS) Building, and the Pier.

After many years of service, Blattenberger retired in 1995. Five years after his retirement, he died on Friday, November 3, 2000. Funeral services were held for him at 2:00 pm on Saturday, November 11 at Greenwood Mortuary on Imperial Avenue. In lieu of flowers, his wife, Jane DiTullio suggested donations to the American Heart Association.

References:

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Photo. "Cal Chapman and Jim Blattenberger." The Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics. Photo no. 2122. Not dated. <http://www.igpp.ucsd.edu/aboutigpp/doors.cfm>