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Press Release

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U.S. Naval Observatory Hosts Hall of Fame Ceremony for GPS Pioneer

By: Jonathan B. Holloway, U.S. Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command Public Affairs

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Naval Observatory (USNO) hosted the Naval Oceanography Hall of Fame (HOF) ceremony to induct USNO’s own Dr. Dennis McCarthy, on April 6, 2023.

“It’s no surprise Dr. McCarthy is being honored as the first USNO employee to be inducted into the Naval Oceanography Hall of Fame,” said CAPT H. F. “Rip” Coke, USNO’s Superintendent. “For the last half century, Dennis has quietly served as the internationally recognized subject matter expert (SME) for Precise Time and Earth Orientation, ensuring the accuracy of navigation products used globally.”

Along with being a founding member of the International Earth Rotation and Reference System Service (IERS), McCarthy achieved milestones during his career at USNO that shaped global society and changed the world.

“Basically, anyone who has ever used GPS to accurately arrive at their target destination should thank him,” said Coke.

In the early 1980s, when U.S. Department of Defense and Navy scientists and engineers expressed concern for the need of Earth Orientation predictions to improve maritime navigation of global commerce and naval vessels, McCarthy was the SME called upon to deliver that need.

McCarthy’s work during that time resulted in creation of the Earth Orientation Department at USNO, after he determined methods to provide Time and Earth Orientation Parameters (EOP).

Notable professional awards obtained by McCarthy include: USNO’s Simon Newcomb Award (1993), the Superintendent’s Award (2006), Navy Superior Civilian Service Award (2006), and the Presidential Rank Award of Meritorious Service Senior Professional (2006).

Originally established as the U.S. Navy Depot of Charts & Instruments 193 years ago, USNO continues to perform an essential operational role for the United States, the Navy, and the Department

of Defense. Its mission includes determining the positions and motions of the Earth, Sun, and Moon, planets, stars, and other celestial objects; providing astronomical data; determining precise time; measuring the Earth's rotation; and maintaining the Master Clock for the United States.

Naval Oceanography has approximately 2,500 globally distributed military and civilian personnel, who collect, process, and exploit environmental information to assist Fleet and Joint Commanders in all warfare areas to guarantee the U.S. Navy's freedom of action in the physical battlespace from the depths of the ocean to the stars.



WASHINGTON, D.C. — Dr. Dennis McCarthy continues to serve as a member of U.S. Working Party 7A of the International Telecommunications Union - Radiocommunications Section. Internationally, he is the representative of the International Astronomical Union to the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures and Consultative Committee on Time and Frequency. He was a founding member and visionary who pushed for the formation of the International Earth Rotation and Reference System Service (the IERS) and all of its component members. He is the primary author of numerous papers and foundation documents like the IERS Conventions 1996 and 2003, and is currently working on the difficult technical challenge to obtain polar motion estimates from Navy-provided oceanic and atmospheric data.