IEEE Region 5 Stepping Stone Award

New IEEE Region 5 Stepping Stone Award to Southwest Research Institute

When the New Horizons Spacecraft flew by Pluto last July 14, 2015, that event made history in the research of the outer planets. Pluto was the last of the known planets to be visited by spacecraft launched from earth. When we learned that Southwest Research Institute (SwRI), headquartered in San Antonio, was heavily involved, Scott Atkinson, felt that the IEEE should provide some recognition of that accomplishment. IEEE provides an award, known as the Milestone Award for historically significant accomplishments but that recognition requires the event to have been accomplished before twenty five years ago.

Scott reached out to the IEEE Region 5 History Chair, Theodore (Ted) Bickart, a long time IEEE associate of Scott's to search for an appropriate award to SwRI for their role in the NASA New Horizons Mission. Ted, who was at the time also on the IEEE History Committee and has participated in many IEEE Milestone considerations and awards, suggested a slight modification of that milestone award might be acceptable and so suggested that the IEEE Region 5 establish an award to be named "IEEE Region 5 Stepping Stone Award".

Ted and Scott presented that new award concept to the Region 5 Executive Committee last November and there was unanimous support for its creation. After some tweaking, in February the Region 5 Executive Committee approved the awarding of the very first Stepping Stone Award to Southwest Research Institute for their role in the New Horizons Mission to Pluto.

Two bronze plaques will be cast with the following:

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**IEEE Region 5 Stepping Stone Award**

**In**

Electrical Engineering and Computing

**NEW HORIZONS SPACECRAFT PROJECT**

This plaque recognizes the historic achievement of NASA’s New Horizons Spacecraft Project supported by Southwest Research Institute’s engineering, science and program management. The Mission completed the reconnaissance of the solar system with the exploration of Pluto and its moons. On July 14, 2015, after traveling more than 9 years and 3 billion miles, this spacecraft and its support team obtained detailed scientific data that is transforming our understanding of the outer solar system.

February 2016

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The first plaque will be presented in a formal ceremony to SwRI at their San Antonio Headquarters and the second at their offices in Boulder, CO. with dignitaries from the IEEE, and SwRI.

More information on the Award may be found on the following documents:

- [Region 5 Stepping Stone Award Description and Process (version 4)]
- [Region 5 Stepping Stone Award Proposal Form (version 4a)]

Additional information is available by contacting T. Scott Atkinson, s.atkinson@ieee.org, or John Purvis, john.purvis@ieee.org.