

## Obituary: Lewis V. Spencer (1924–2005)

Tatsuo TABATA

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Lewis V. Spencer and his wife Elizabeth in the spring of 1978  
(Courtesy of Elizabeth W. Spencer)

**L**EWIS V. Spencer, known for his seminal work on the theory of electron penetration by the use of the moments method, passed away on November 11, 2005. The present author heard this sad news from John Hubbell and wrote him the following message:

Saturday, November 12, 2005

Dear John,

Thanks for forwarding me messages about Lew’s passing.

I learned much from Lew’s wonderful report “NBS Monograph 1”<sup>1</sup> and a related paper<sup>2</sup> published in *Physical Review*. I first saw him on the occasion of his visit to Japan. He was then awarded the Gray Medal at an international meeting, and was invited to Kyoto by Professor Hyodo to give a lecture. I brought with me new experimental results on the charge deposition distributions of electrons in elemental solids to show them to Lew in Kyoto. He kindly advised me to send them to Martin Berger to compare them with his

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<sup>1</sup>L. V. Spencer, “Energy Dissipation by Fast Electrons,” *NBS Monograph 1* (1959).

<sup>2</sup>L. V. Spencer, *Phys. Rev.* **98**, 1597 (1955).

Monte Carlo results. My coworkers and I sent the paper on that experiment to *Physical Review*. I guess that the reviewer of that paper was Lew from the reviewer's words and suggestions. When I visited NBS in 1979, I saw him for the second time. I'll never forget comfortable conversations with him. I sincerely wish that Lew now rests peacefully in heaven.

Best regards,  
Tatsu

John forwarded the above message to Lew's family as a message "from another of the many world-class researchers around the globe, Prof. Tatsuo Tabata, Osaka, Japan, whose lives touched by Lew's work and his life."

*Notes added later*

Lew's youngest daughter Mary Ellen Goree, a violinist of San Antonio Symphony, found this obituary, and wrote the words of thanks on the guest book page of my Web site on July 1, 2008. I got another message from her on September 13, 2009. This time she wanted to know the name of one of the Japanese colleagues of her father in a slide of May 1974. Thus, she and I exchanged some e-mail messages. She kindly informed me of [the Web page](#) where we can read the obituary of Lew carried by *The Washington Post*.

When I saw Lew for the first time, I was surprised to find that he did not have the right arm, and supposed that he might have lost it in the war. The real cause of his losing not only the right arm but also the right leg is written in the obituary there as follows:

When he was bicycling to the train station to pick up the afternoon papers for his delivery route, 12-year-old Lew was run over at a railroad crossing by a coal car. In spite of this accident, Lew continued to play piano with his left hand, mastering difficult pieces. He also became a master one-handed typist, capable of typing 100 words a minute with no errors.

This is a moving story to encourage handicapped young persons, though Mary told me that Lew had never considered himself handicapped. (September 16, 2009)

After above communications, Mary and I became friends on Facebook. In August 2017, she organized her father's pictures taken in his 1969 visit to Japan into a book for her mother. The book was entitled "Japan 1969: Travels of Lewis and Elizabeth Spencer". To make me feel honored, one of its pages carried my passage in the letter to John Hubbell, under Mary's words "In addition to sightseeing, Dad met with Japanese researchers." (January 10, 2018).