# obituary

Vojtech Jaroslav Kopský (1936–2016)

D. B. Litvin[a]* and V. Janovec[b]*

[a]Department of Physics, The Eberly College of Science, The Pennsylvania State University, Penn State Berks, PO Box 7009, Reading, Pennsylvania 19610, USA, and [b]Institute of Physics AV ČR, Na Slovance 2, 182 21 Prague 8, Czech Republic. *Correspondence e-mail: u3c@psu.edu, janovec@fzu.cz

Vojtech Jaroslav Kopský , a Czech mathematical physicist/crystallographer and educator, died on 14 May 2016 in his home town of Prague after a long illness a few months past his 80th birthday. He was born in Prague, Czech Republic, in 1936. He studied at the Faculty of Physics of Charles University, Prague, in 1954 and 1955, then at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at the Leningrad State University, where he graduated with a Master of Science. During the early 1960s he worked in Prague as a Consulting Physicist at the Institute of Vacuum Electronics and the Institute of Telecommunications. After postdoctoral studies at the Institute of Solid State Physics of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Kopský became a Research Physicist in the Department of Dielectrics of the Institute of Physics in 1969 and obtained a PhD from the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1970. From 1979 until his retirement in 2008 he worked as a Senior Research Scientist in the Department of Theoretical Physics of the Institute of Physics.
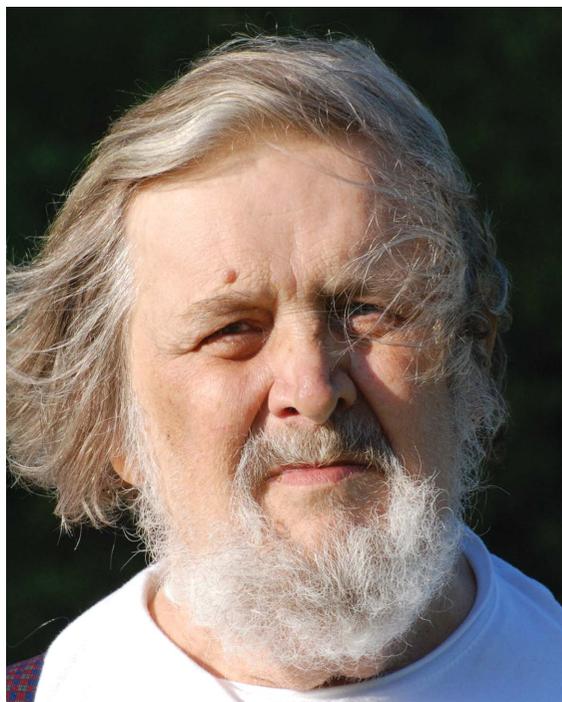
Throughout his career, Kopský's research interests focused in part on group theory and its application to solid-state physics, particularly on phase transitions and tensor properties of materials and domains. These studies culminated in comprehensive tables of tensor parameters of ferroic transitions. His interest and work in the theoretical underpinnings of the application of group theory to crystallography led to publications on the structure of and relationships between crystallographic groups, such as between three-dimensional space groups and subperiodic groups. This, in turn, led Kopský and D. B. Litvin to become co-editors and co-authors of Volume E, *Subperiodic groups*, of *International Tables for Crystallography*. With V. Janovec he co-authored a chapter in Volume D, *Physical properties of crystals*, of the same series, and with P. Bocek he wrote software that was included with Volume D. Kopský was also a member of the International Union

of Crystallography's Commissions on International Tables and on Crystallographic Nomenclature.

Vojtech Kopský wrote over a hundred popular articles on physics and mathematics for a Czech science magazine for teenagers. Included in his varied interests were two patents related to 'Square-1' – a Rubic's cube-like three-dimensional puzzle (theoretically based on permutation groups) which was manufactured by a Canadian firm.

During his career, Vojtech Kopský held Visiting Research positions at the Institute of Crystallography of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1976, and at the Pennsylvania State University, Penn State Berks in 1986 and 1990. He spent 1971–1973 as Professor of Physics in the Department of Physics of the Al Mustansyriyah University in Baghdad, Iraq, and 1991–1994 as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Physics of the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. He also lectured at the Technology University of Liberec, Czech Republic, where he was appointed Professor in 2001.

We have lost a talented researcher, lecturer and popularizer. His critical and original scientific results on the foundations of crystallography are still waiting for deserved evaluation and recognition.