
In memory of Jean Delery: 60 years of service to aerodynamics

Letter to the editor

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Jean Delery passed away suddenly on December 6, 2022, at the age of 83. His passing is a great loss for the Aeronautics and Aerospace community, to which he contributed so much over a 60-year career.



After 40 years spent at The French Aeronautics Lab (ONERA), he had been chair of the Aerodynamics Technical Committee of the French Aeronautics and Aerospace Society (3AF) for 20 years and member of the 3AF High Scientific Council.

In 1962, Jean Delery graduated with distinction from the National School of Aeronautics (Ecole Nationale Supérieure de l'Aéronautique et de l'Espace, SupAéro, Toulouse, France). In 1964, he joined ONERA (the French Aerospace Lab) as a research engineer at the Meudon center (France). In 1982, he became Head of the Fundamental Aerodynamics Division. In 1996, he was appointed as Director of the Fundamental and Experimental Aerodynamics Department, which encompasses all the aerodynamic activities of the ONERA center at Meudon, with a battery of wind tunnels ranging from the low subsonic to the hypersonic.

During his career, he participated with brio in basic research in the major aerospace programs of the second part of the 20th century in both military (strategic and tactical missiles and combat aircraft [Rafale]) and civil fields (transport aircraft [Airbus] and launch vehicles [Ariane]).

As a high-caliber researcher, he published many internal reports as well as articles in prestigious peer-reviewed journals. ONERA's archives contain about 200 documents which he authored or coauthored. He also published reference books on compressible aerodynamics, experimental methods and wind tunnels. He has also coedited several special issues in high-



International Journal of Numerical
Methods for Heat & Fluid Flow
Vol. 33 No. 4, 2023
pp. 1291-1294
© Emerald Publishing Limited
0961-5539
DOI 10.1108/HFF-04-2023-937

ranking journals such as the *JNMF*, dedicated to specific topics in the field of aerodynamics.

Jean Détery had been awarded the Monthion Prize from the Academy of Sciences for his entire body of work on turbulent detached flows. He was Knight of the National Order of Merit, Knight of the Palmes Académiques, emeritus director of research at ONERA, emeritus member of 3AF and Associate Fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) after receiving the prestigious *Aerodynamics Award* from the AIAA in 2004.

In addition to his research activities, he also pursued a sustained teaching activity. He was Professor of Aerodynamics at Sup'aéro, Associate Professor at Versailles Saint-Quentin-En Yvelines University, as well as lecturer at Ecole Polytechnique Féminine and Rome's La Sapienza University.

Upon his retirement from ONERA in 2003, Jean Détery fully invested his efforts in the 3AF. Thanks to his energy, the annual symposium of Applied Aerodynamics became a major International Conference of Applied Aerodynamics, with more and more participants each year. He had managed to attract more than 70 French and foreign personalities to the committee. Although not everyone came along every time, the quarterly meetings of the committee were a lively affair because of the large number of participants. His authoritarian facade concealed a great deal of kindness toward everyone, and nobody could fail to see it. His guidelines were always followed because they were thoughtful and constructive.

For more than 10 years, Jean took part diligently in the work of the editorial committee for the 3AF Letter, critically reviewing all the articles proposed, for both form and content. He was considered by his committee colleagues to be an outstanding reviewer. For their part, the authors were delighted with the suggestions he made, as these always helped to improve their contributions. He was also recognized by scientific publishers and carried out numerous expert appraisals for prestigious journals.



Some testimonials:

- Michel Scheller, former president of ONERA and honorary President of 3AF, has expressed very well what many are feeling today:

It is hard to talk about Jean without mentioning his great qualities, qualities that we would like to see more widely shared. Jean, an expert of world renown, was a model of simplicity, modernity, and kindness, as well as expressing the humanity found in great people. Jean was a paragon of loyalty, especially in the way he dedicated so much time to young people. His teaching was appreciated by everyone. After leaving the company, which the retirement age forced him to do, Jean continued to work (voluntarily but with a passion) for the learned society, 3AF. Jean radiated warmth, the

warmheartedness of those for whom it comes naturally – and when you met Jean you were meeting a learned person – to pursue but one ambition: to be of service. 3AF letter, January 2023;

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editor

- Bruno Chanetz, President of Alumni-ONERA, former president of the 3AF High Scientific Council and of the 3AF Letter editorial board and coeditor of the *IJNMHFF* special issues devoted to applied aerodynamics:

I joined the Aerodynamics Technical Committee of the French Aeronautics and Aerospace Society (3AF) to continue working with him. He had hired me 20 years earlier and I am very grateful to him for all the invaluable help he gave me, as supervisor of my thesis, since this was a man who was always passionate about passing on his knowledge. Later, in 2003, Jean suggested that I take over as Associate Professor at Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines University. He then handed over to me with great generosity all the teaching materials he had prepared with the thoroughness and attention to detail that was his trademark. Jean really did have an innate desire to pass on knowledge and was always keen to promote teaching aspirations within his department. His many scientific works are also testament to his tireless activity in training young people in aerodynamics.

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- Abderrahmane Bairi, Professor, Guest Editor-in-Chief of the *IJNMHFF* special issues devoted to applied aerodynamics, member of the 3AF Aerodynamics Commission and 3AF High Scientific Council:

His engaging personality and dedication to the scientific community will be greatly missed. I am deeply affected by the disappearance of my warm and generous friend Jean, with whom I shared very pleasant years of work within the 3AF.

- Former PhD students trained at ONERA:

I had the privilege of having him as my thesis director, in short he taught me how to become an aerodynamics engineer. But, above all, it is his human qualities that I will remember him for.

I was lucky enough to cross his path in Meudon. He has engraved his name in the world of aerodynamics. What I will remember of him is an exceptional teacher, only too happy to pass on what he knew to young people, and an older gentleman who addressed me as a peer, and whose sense of humor I appreciated.

I remember a very caring man, very concerned about the quality of human relations and the knowledge he passed on.

I will cherish a pleasant memory of a good person and a leading scientist who remained accessible to everyone.

I had the great good fortune of being alongside Jean Détery for most of my career at Onera. Jean provided his expert advice to the entire world of aeronautics and aerospace with exceptional pedagogy. For several generations of aerodynamicists, he was one of our best teachers and advisors.

Jean Détery had a huge impact on my life and changed the course of my fate significantly. Thanks to his warm welcome at ONERA and his encouragement to pursue a PhD at Paris VI, he opened the door for me to opportunities that I could never have imagined coming my way.

- From some members of the 3AF Aerodynamics Commission and 3AF High Scientific Council, who express the high level of esteem in which they held this man, who had devoted so much generosity, talent and constancy to 3AF.

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Jean was a good man with so many qualities.

In my opinion, he was a very charming, courteous, cultivated and hardworking gentleman, and his passing marks a sad loss for 3AF.

Very sad news. We have lost someone who was friendly, motivated, and passionate, and who was always there for you.

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It was a real pleasure to be around him. 3AF has also lost a member who devoted so much time and energy to it.

I really appreciated Jean, whom I met as chairman of a 3AF committee and then on the 3AF Letter editorial committee some ten years ago. I really enjoyed talking to him about a wide variety of topics, including the grandchildren. He was a really charming person, and what will also stick with me is his great scientific culture and his extensive knowledge of the aeronautical world.

Jean Delery will be sadly missed by all his family and friends.



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