

# Janusz Bryzek Tribute Retrospective

*Roger H. Grace*

*with Sandeep Akkaraju, Brian Birkumshaw, Joe Mallon, And Kurt Petersen*

## PROLOGUE

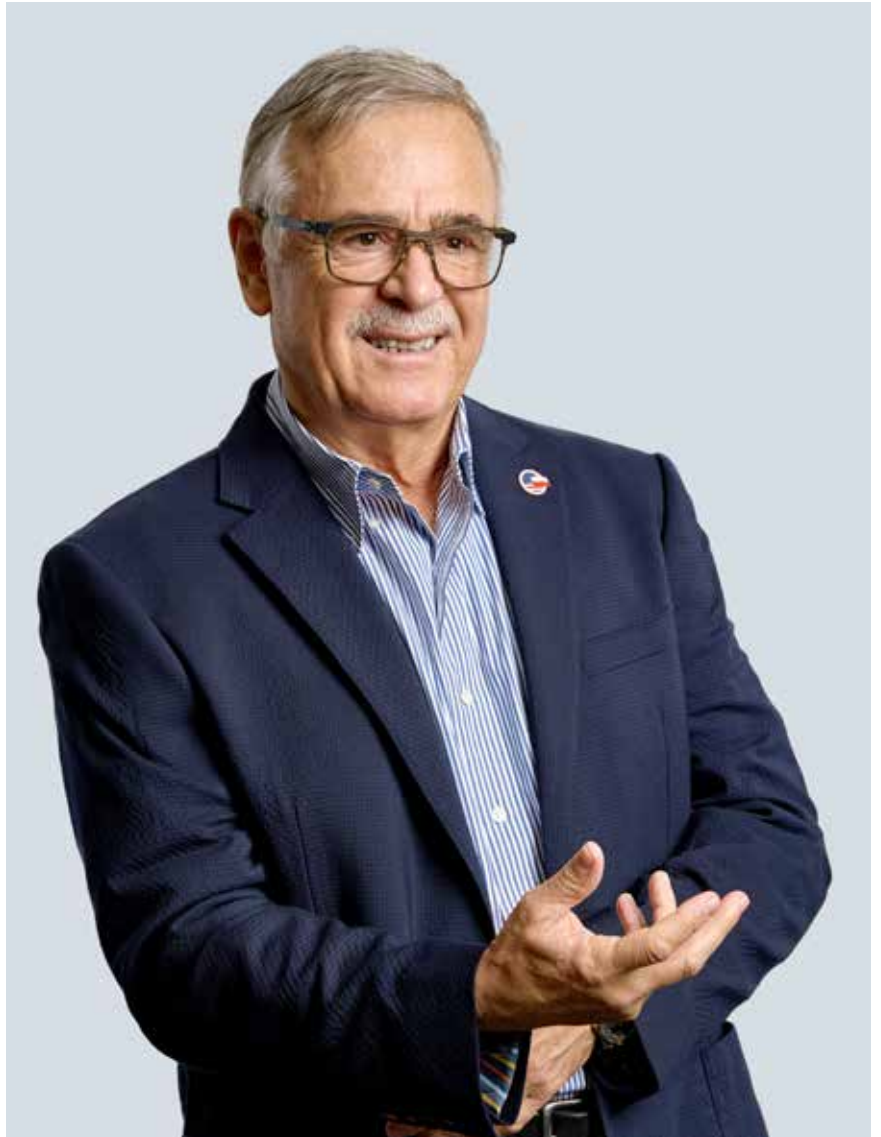
The sensor community mourns the loss of one of its most favorite sons... Janusz Bryzek Ph.D., who passed peacefully at his Oakland Hills, California home at the age of seventy-four on November 10, 2022 surrounded by his loving family. In discussions with Bette Cooper, past MEPTEC Executive Director, and Ira Feldman, MEPTEC Executive Director, who were also good friends and colleagues of Janusz, we concurred that a retrospective article as a tribute to Janusz would be a fitting and proper gesture to honor this great man. As a result of this, I took on the role as editorial coordinator to bring together a group of Janusz's very closest friends and colleagues to create this article. Contributors were asked to submit their thoughts of their experience and relationship with Janusz...their comments have been reproduced in their entirety and without any editing. I provided additional contributions.

## ROGER GRACE

My comments, which come from both a business and personal perspective of Janusz, will begin with how we came to connect with each other at Foxboro ICT over four decades ago, and then transitioned into our many years together at NovaSensor and thereafter on many projects including the development of the IEEE 1451 Smart Sensor Interface Standard and the Trillion Sensors Initiative.

It is interesting to note that while our relationship started off as purely a business one, it quickly morphed into one of intense personal friendship between us and then to our families. And to this point, Janusz, and his lovely wife Barbara, asked me to be the godfather of their youngest son Paul.

Soon after his arrival in the US from his native Poland with his wife Barbara and two children, Michael and Agnes,



and with only \$600 in his pocket, Janusz joined the engineering team at Foxboro ICT in San Jose, California as a project engineer. Here he led the team to design, develop, and manufacture the industry's first disposable blood pressure sensor, which application I discovered as the new marketing manager of the company.

Thanks to his laser focus, dedication, perseverance, passion, and creativity, this product went on to become the industry's first large scale production MEMS (microelectromechanical systems) medical device, with over 30 million currently being sold annually. This product concept was later refined by IC Sensors and



Janusz with Roger Grace.

NovaSensor, both startups being formed by Janusz, and it continues to this day.

In his unbounded and insatiable quest to create bigger and better sensor companies, Janusz collaborated with Kurt Petersen and Joe Mallon to create NovaSensor in 1984 in Silicon Valley. Roger Grace Associates had pleasure of being invited by Janusz to join the team, and we did so as their marketing consultants for over 10 years. Barbara Bryzek also played a significant part in the finance area of this startup. The “true” Janusz came out emphatically at NovaSensor where he helped create a NovaSensor “family”, encouraging and supporting people to achieve their goals with himself as a great example and being a true mentor to many. NovaSensor was a truly successful startup going from obscurity to being a world-renowned MEMS company in a relatively short period of time due to the extraordinary creativity and perseverance of the co-founders Joe Mallon and Kurt Petersen and especially from the drive, perseverance, brilliance, vision, and energy of Janusz.

#### JOE MALLON

I remember Janusz as he lived, vigorous and full of life. His well-known contributions to MEMS sensors arose from a passionate embrace of technology, and from living out his dreams birthed in Poland, and matured in Silicon Valley in

an adopted country that he loved.

A MEMS and Sensors proselytizer extraordinaire, he had that special ability to communicate enthusiasm and inspire action. His work helped enormously to grow the technology. Knowing him changed my life, as it did for many.

He was visionary, creative, and always immersed in the moment, giving you his full attention as he called you to join together in creating the Biggest and Best. He had a generous nature. Each collaboration was win-win, be it a new company, joyous song, elegant house, oil painting, polka dance, technology paper, conference, or patentable invention. Whatever, it didn't matter.

An encounter with him was not to be taken lightly, and to engage was to ride the wind. Our cofounding of NovaSensor, an early Silicon Valley MEMS startup, was certainly that.

His physical presence ended too soon, but his spirit lives on in the MEMS products that pervade daily life, in his dearly loved family, and especially in the memories of his colleagues and friends.

I miss you dear friend, but you are in my thoughts and in the warm smile that your memory brings so readily to my face.

For sure, rest in peace does not apply. Your spirit only seeks the realm of dynamic growth, and bold, creative adventure.

#### KURT PETERSEN

I feel incredibly fortunate that I have been able to call Janusz a GREAT friend for over 40 years. We met in 1980. Even then, Janusz was a larger-than-life force-of-nature. Janusz always did everything BIG. BIG ideas. BIG endeavors. BIG technology. BIG accomplishments. And, most importantly, a BIG heart. When we were putting NovaSensor together, our attorney and others told us that our business plan, written mostly by Janusz, of course, sounded more like a religion than a business, because Janusz was SOO incredibly passionate about MEMS. But, of course, Janusz was passionate about everything. Importantly, Janusz was also about people. I was always amazed that Janusz knew SOO much about all the employees at his companies – their spouse's name, their children, birthdays, anniversaries, issues going on in their lives, etc.

We stayed in close touch after NovaSensor. I was always astounded by every one of his new business ventures. They were visionary. They were technically aggressive. They were all awe-inspiring. Finally, Janusz was an unabashed, happy optimist. His enthusiasm and passion for the world of “Abundance” is a testament to Janusz's optimistic spirit. Throughout his life, Janusz constantly influenced and added tremendous value and happiness to the lives of many hundreds, if not thousands, of people. We will all miss you, My Friend.

#### BRIAN BIRKUMSHAW

Janusz Bryzek changed my life. I was preparing to take a job abroad in 2005 when Prof. Al Pisano, my Ph.D. supervisor, called me up: “Brian, I'd like you to meet a friend and hear what he has to say.” Within twenty-four hours Janusz had convinced me to meet his crew. Seventy-two hours later I had an offer to join LV Sensors, a start-up creating a TPMS (tire pressure monitoring system). I canceled my flight, accepted the job, and stayed in California. My life took a dramatic turn. It was just another Wednesday for Janusz.

You see, Janusz was unique among visionaries. His passion was to innovate, and he invited all around him to join. He truly listened to you, fenced with your ideas, and would build upon them. Eventually, with persistence, you would earn Janusz's hallmark boyish grin as together you settled upon a new breakthrough. He won your support and loyalty through his



**Kurt Petersen, Roger Grace, Janusz, and Ashok Sridhar.**

unbridled passion and inclusion. Janusz was a titan in the sensors industry and the bedrock of the MEMS community, and I was fortunate to call him a friend.

I continued sharing adventures with Janusz and his loving wife Barbara: from LV Sensors to Jyve to Fairchild and eventually to Exo Imaging today. In the past few years, Janusz and Barbara became more than mentors. They became family to myself, my wife, and our two young boys. My wife moved from Taiwan to the US in 2019 just before COVID. Imagine being new to a country with no friends and trapped inside all day with two children. Janusz and Barbara became the family we did not have in the area. When my 3-year-old son had to be rushed to the ER while I was abroad, my wife turned to Janusz and Barbara to take care of our nine-month old. Janusz was a technologist and an entrepreneur, but above all else he was welcoming.

### **SANDEEP AKKARAJU**

Janusz was my business partner for over fifteen years, instrumental in setting the north star for Exo's vision; he embodied generosity, warmth, and kindness to everyone around him.

Janusz was a man of prolific abundance. When we started our second company together, he showed up with over a dozen viable ideas on changing healthcare — we settled on Exo. He had a knack for creating something out of nothing — from creating a new life for his family as an emigree to creating close to a dozen

startups or ideating technologies that have impacted the world.

But even more impressive was his generosity in helping others create something out of nothing. He allowed other entrepreneurs to overcome their fear of failure and instead look at the world through a lens of possibility.



**Janusz and Barbara making a presentation.**

### **EPILOGUE**

Janusz was so special in so many ways, and the one most extraordinary was his abundant human side, passionate about life in general and especially about music, tennis, his loving wife, 3 children, and 4 grandchildren. He was the consummate loving, caring, and generous man.

Janusz was a giant in the worldwide sensors and MEMS community. A true

icon of technical entrepreneurship. He was never too busy or too self-important not to provide assistance to people, and especially me. He touched the lives of many with his soft, benevolent smile and his kind demeanor. He was a tiger on the outside and a teddy bear within.

At this point, I would like to share some of the other comments provided to me from several individuals who knew Janusz, plus some of my own:

Joyful, playful, larger than life, fortitude, kind, passionate, dogged persistence, of boundless energy, indefatigable, humble, limitless, generous, honest, a consummate entrepreneur, respected worldwide, an industry pioneer, a true visionary, and these qualities were all integral to both his business and personal lives.

Finally, I would like to conclude my comments with a popular quote — “Behind every great man there is an even greater woman.”... and that fits Barbara Bryzek to a tee. As a result of my many years as a “extended Bryzek family member”, I can say emphatically, and I trust that my sentiments are held by many others who knew them both, that Barbara is a quintessential partner, wife, and mother. Their three exceptional children are living proof of the love and dedication that both Janusz and Barbara have given over all these years.

And thank you Barbara for all the gracious kindness, support, dedication, and love that you have selflessly given to Janusz, your children, your grandchildren, and to me.

Janusz Bryzek...rest in peace. ♦

### **Contributors**

**Roger H. Grace**, President, Roger Grace Associates, a marketing consultancy specializing in MEMS and Sensors, [rgrace@rgrace.com](mailto:rgrace@rgrace.com), [www.rgrace.com](http://www.rgrace.com)

**Sandeep Akkaraju**, CEO, Exo Imaging, suppliers of point-of-care ultra-sound platforms for medical imaging applications, [www.exo.inc](http://www.exo.inc)

**Brian Birkumshaw, Ph.D.**, V.P. of Transducer Technology, Exo Imaging, suppliers of point-of-care ultra-sound platforms for medical imaging applications, [www.exo.inc](http://www.exo.inc)

**Joe Mallon**, MEMS industry pioneer and former CEO of Measurement Specialties (now TE Connectivity), [www.je.com](http://www.je.com)

**Kurt Petersen, Ph.D.**, “The Father of MEMS” and member of Silicon Valley Band of Angels Venture Capital Group, [www.bandangels.com](http://www.bandangels.com)