

Profile of a New Physics Major Who Heard the Call

Just one year ago, undergraduate **John Johnson** was struggling to keep his head above water as an average mechanical engineering student. Now, as one of the Physics department's newest students, he's not only excelling in the classroom but in many other activities as well. From designing the Physics Department's web page to participating as an active member of the Society of Physics Students, it is clear that John has found a home in the Physics Department.

So what prompted the change? John explains, "I had the grades of a mediocre mechanical engineer, yet I knew that I was not a mediocre student. I wanted to study something that I could have a passion for." A tour of the Physics Department and careful examination of the course catalog convinced him to make the change. And the change has proved to be for the better.

In John's first semester in the Physics Department, he earned a 3.77 GPA. In addition to excelling in the classroom, he still found time for many activities, both in the department and on the UMR campus.

One of John's first undertakings upon his arrival in the Physics Department was the redesign of the departmental web page, located at www.umn.edu/~physics. He has also used his web page design skills to create pages for the Society of Physics Students as well as several other organizations on campus. John's



John Johnson - "I can't keep this pace up forever"

student-run KMNK (89.7 FM) as a deejay and as a business assistant. He also serves as KMNK's representative to Student Council. These activities led to his idea to start a new joint KMNK/Student Council talk show. About the prospect of hosting his own talk show, he says, "I'm really excited. The show is pretty much a first on the UMR campus. It will finally provide a truly open forum for the discussion of issues."

Talk show host, computer jock, outstanding student . . . so what's next for John? "Well, I can't keep this pace up forever. I hope to begin research this summer, but until then it's just the same old stuff!"

computer skills were also put to use over winter break as he worked as an assistant to senior electronics technician, **Brian Swift**. Together they installed new computers in the Physics Computer Learning Center as well as the engineering physics laboratories.

John also works as an undergraduate teaching assistant for Prof. **Ron Bieniek** in the Physics Learning Center. As a self-professed "battle-scarred veteran" of the Engineering Physics program, John says that he enjoys being able to help other students succeed as he did.

Outside the Physics department, John works at

Don Meyer Receives Alumni Service Award

Donald I. Meyer (BS '46) was presented with an Alumni Service Award at Homecoming 1997 in recognition of his dedicated service to the UMR and the Alumni Association. While at UMR, Don was president of the Music Club, on the Student Council, an honored member of the St. Pat's Board, and the recipient of the A.P. Green Medal for academic achievement. Don received his PhD in nuclear



Don Meyer

physics from the University of Washington. After stints at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Brookhaven National Laboratory and the University of Oklahoma, he joined the physics faculty at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

His initial research efforts involved bubble chamber experiments. Don's experimental research took him to accelerators at CERN, Argonne National Lab, Fermi Lab, and SLAC. He designed the spark chamber exhibited by General Motors at the New York World's Fair in 1964. In 1987, he shifted his research to astrophysics with the objective of employing his experimental expertise in particle physics to the detection of high energy gamma rays from astronomical objects.

He discovered that, contrary to expectations, quasars as well as supernova remnants emit copious amounts of high energy gamma rays. He has published more than 100 papers in high-energy astrophysics and the interactions and properties of quarks, leptons, and gluons.

During his tenure at Michigan, Don oversaw a \$60 million project to construct a new building for the physics department and also renovate some older ones. He also displayed his UMR heritage at Michigan by initiating a joint program between physics and engineering to train PhD students in the practical applications of modern physics technologies, which led to Michigan's highly successful Program in Applied Physics.