

Prof. Hildreth “Hal” Walker Jr.



Hildreth “Hal” Walker Jr. won fame as an innovative thinker, collaborator and role model, in the realm of energy technology, especially in applications of lasers. In 1969 came Walker’s most sensational success. Working for KORAD Lasers a Union Carbide’s Laser Systems division, he led a team that adapted a ruby laser for measuring the distance from the Earth to the Moon during the Apollo 11 mission. Walker’s team trained a K1500 laser systems beam from Lick Observatory in California at a reflector mirror, only 18 inches wide, that Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin had set up on the Moon’s surface. Walker’s team recorded by far the most accurate measurement of the distance ever, exact to within 5 meters. The equipment used for the experiment is now on permanent exhibit in the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. Walker went on to join Hughes Aircraft, where he developed the first laser targeting systems for the US Army (1981). Since retiring from Hughes, Walker has founded his own international laser systems consulting firm, Tech Plus (1990), and co-founded, with his wife, the African-American Male Achievers Network, Inc., or A-MAN (1991), which uses hands-on demonstrations and extracurricular projects to encourage and support boys’ and girls’ interests in careers in math, science and business.