

# IN MEMORIAM



## DR. LOAN (JOAN) PHAM

Our distinguished colleague, Dr. Loan (Joan) Pham, passed away suddenly on August 16, 2023. This is a tragic and overwhelming loss to all who knew Joan, but she and her work will be remembered throughout the fields of system safety and aviation safety. Joan was born in Vietnam in 1968, and at age seven, she was separated from her family while escaping the communist takeover. Eight years later they were reconnected, and she came to the US just before high school with minimal knowledge of the English language. She became a brilliant and hardworking student, receiving a B.S. in Core Mathematics and M.S. in Statistics at Purdue, and a Ph.D. in Industrial and System Engineering at Rutgers – a rare combination of degrees that prepared her for the unique position that she held at Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company.

Joan began her career as a research assistant at the Federal Aviation Administration while a doctoral student and upon graduation, she became a member of the Technical Staff at Lucent Technologies (formerly Bell Laboratories). Dr. Pham faced the daunting challenges of a young Asian woman entering a workplace dominated by older men, but her success in overcoming the challenges of her early life and her educational accomplishments provided confidence to surmount these new obstacles. Through dedication and persistence, her knowledge and intellect became

evident, and she became accepted and eventually recognized for her contributions in aviation safety risk management. Dr. Pham became an industry leader in quantitative risk assessment based on reliability theory and mathematical processes. She co-authored more than a dozen technical papers, presented many tutorials at conferences and symposia, and she participated on the Systems Engineering committee and the Safety committee of the Vertical Flight Society. Joan served as a session chair and was the current Deputy Chair of the Systems Engineering committee. In 2021, Dr. Pham was named a Lockheed Martin Associate Technical Fellow.

She served as a patient and thoughtful long-term mentor to many individuals who demonstrated interest in her quantitative risk assessment processes, and on an ad-hoc basis to personnel at the Federal Aviation Administration and other organizations.

Joan received many awards, including the Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers Professional Achievement Award in 2022, and she was scheduled to receive the Scientific Achievement Award from the International System Safety Society on August 28, 2023. Mike Cerneck, Director, Aviation & Product Safety, accepted the award on her behalf, and the award plaque was given to her husband Tinh at her funeral service. As one colleague said, “the world is a better place because of Joan.”