



## Henry Story McKown

April 12, 1921 - August 29, 2015

Henry (Hank) Story McKown

Worked at ORNL, was a Charter Member of Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church

Henry Story McKown (Hank) of Oak Ridge at the age 94 died Saturday, August 29, 2015.

Hank McKown was born April 12, 1921 in Rochester, NY, son of Samuel Campbell McKown and Louise Story McKown. As a teenager, he spent many years helping his father run and repair a small flour mill outside the city of Rochester. They also built a sailboat and enjoyed many summer days sailing, canoeing and swimming in the Adirondacks. During the winter, the family spent many hours snow skiing and ice skating. After college he helped his father build a lake cabin on Canandaigua Lake near Rochester, which was later the model for a lake cabin on Watts Bar Lake that he built for his family .

After graduating from a public high school, he went to Williams College, Williamstown Massachusetts majoring in chemistry with a minor in physics and an interest in electronics and graduating in 1943 .

In December 1942 he started working in the chemistry department of Columbia University on a secret project which later was called the Manhattan Project. After eight months he was sent to Trail, British Columbia to help in the development of an analytical laboratory that was measuring the concentration of deuterium in heavy water. The experience in Canada was very enjoyable being in a small town and a country outside the US to explore, hike and ski. After 14 months he returned to Columbia University where all activities there were involved with research for the K-25 uranium enrichment facilities in Oak Ridge, TN.

After the end of World War II, the laboratory in New York was shut down and Hank transferred to K-25 in Oak Ridge in 1946. In 1960 he transferred to Oak Ridge National Laboratory where he worked until retirement in 1993. He then did consulting work three

days a week for 17 more years until he turned

88. All his work involved the improvement of the instrumentation in mass spectrometers for the measurement of isotopic ratios.

In 1946 Hank met Helen Howes in Oak Ridge square dancing at Glenwood Elementary School and married her a year later. They enjoyed a strong, loving marriage. They spent many a summer taking their four daughters to see many US states and enjoying the national parks when they weren't at their lake cabin.

In 1975 his work took them to Vienna, Austria for three years where he worked for the International Atomic Energy Agency in the Safeguards project. It was one of many highlights in his professional career. This was a wonderful experience for Hank and Helen as they met people with whom they still correspond in Europe. They enjoyed many a symphony and opera in Vienna, skiing and hiking in the Alps and touring throughout Europe, the Middle East, the Eastern Bloc countries and Russia during those three years. After coming back to the States, later they traveled to China, Australia, New Zealand, Kenya, Tanzania, Belize, Costa Rico, Peru and the Galapagos Island, as well as Hawaii and Alaska .

In 1949 Hank was one of the founding members of the Oak Ridge Unitarian Church and extremely active serving on the building, finance and other committees . He also was a member of the Instrument Society of America and the Greenways Committee for the City of Oak Ridge. After retirement, Hank volunteered at the American Museum of Science & Energy for at least 10 years where he had the opportunity to share his experiences and knowledge of the history of Oak Ridge with visitors. His only lunch box that he took to work for all those years now rests in the flat top's kitchen at the museum.

Mr. McKown is survived by his loving wife of 68 years, Helen Howes McKown; daughters, Louise McKown of Oak Ridge; Elizabeth (Betsy) and husband Dexter Perkins of Grand Forks, ND; Anne and husband Garry Child of Dripping Springs, TX; Jean and husband Ronald Norton of Solebury, PA; four grandchildren, George and Douglas Perkins and Eric and Lindsey Norton, and one great granddaughter, Cora Perkins. He is also survived by his sister Mary and husband Bruce Cunningham of Kingsport, TN, a sister-in-law, Carrie Howes of St. Paul, Minnesota, five nieces and nephews and their children.

A memorial service celebrating Hank's long life followed by a reception will be held at 2:30 on Saturday, September 12th at the Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church with Rev. Jake Bohstedt Morrill and Rev. Tandy Scheffler officiating.

The family asks that in lieu of flowers, any memorials be to the Endowment Fund of the Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church, 809 Oak Ridge Turnpike, Oak Ridge, TN 37830, or the charity of your choice.

# Comments

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“ Helen and Family,  
I will always cherish the memories of the lunches that I shared with Hank and the "ole bunch" at the Soup Kitchen. Hank always took the time to encourage me when I came to ORNL. His work related stories were awesome. He always had a smile and warm welcome. He will be missed.

Mary Lynn Turner

Mary Turner - April 27, 2016 at 12:19 PM

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“ Helen and McKown children,  
I have just learned of Hank's death. He was a very caring husband and father. We had some wonderful times together in the mid-70's in Vienna. I remember many good times at dinners and concerts. I send my condolences to all the family. May God bless each of you.  
Mayme Roberson Crowell

Mayme Roberson Crowell - September 12, 2015 at 07:09 PM

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“ I was so sorry to hear that Mr. McKown had passed on. My favorite memories of him were from the visits I made to the McKowns' "Happy Shack" up at the lake. He was so patient towing us around as we tried to learn to ski, and just as happy to supervise us at the dock where we went swimming. His warm smile will always remain in my memory, and I will miss him always. Love, Nancy (Horton) Burch

Nancy H Burch - September 08, 2015 at 07:06 PM

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“ We so appreciate all the years Hank and Helen volunteered at AMSE. They were always there on Friday mornings with a smile and pleasant greetings for all visitors and staff. He is missed. So sorry for your loss.

Pat Fitchpatrick - September 08, 2015 at 02:54 PM

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“ I had the pleasure of working with Hank from the day he joined our Mass Spectrometry group at Y-12 until the day I retired in 1992. He was an invaluable asset to the group. His ability in Assembly language programming and the creation of electronic circuits used in the collection of data produced by our instruments kept our

group on the leading edge in this field. He was very well liked and will be sorely missed. Chris

**Warner H. Christie, PhD** - September 06, 2015 at 11:57 AM