



William Jenkins Wilcox, Jr. Obituary

January 26, 1923 - September 2, 2013

William Jenkins Wilcox Jr.

Oak Ridge pioneer, city historian

William Jenkins Wilcox Jr., 90, Oak Ridge pioneer and longtime resident, died Monday, Sept. 2, 2013, at NHC Healthcare of Oak Ridge.

The son of attorney William J. Wilcox Sr. and Kitty Rogers Wilcox, Bill was born Jan. 26, 1923, in Harrisburg, Pa. He grew up in Allentown, Pa. He attended Allentown High School and graduated with honors from Washington & Lee University in 1943 with a major in chemistry. He joined the Manhattan Project in May 1943, worked that summer on uranium purification processes for Tennessee Eastman Corp. in Rochester, N.Y. He moved to Oak Ridge in October 1943 when Building 9203 at the Y-12 Plant was completed. He was Badge No. 254.

During the early war years and until the end of World War II, Bill was in charge of Beta chemistry as well as the Special Operations Lab and then served in the Analytical Chemistry Division, setting up the statistical quality control program – the first at Y-12.

From there, his long distinguished career included that of research chemist, technical assistant, physics department head and division director for gaseous diffusion and gas centrifuge at K-25. For 12 years, Bill was the technical director for Union Carbide's Nuclear Division in charge of the R&D and technical service organizations at both the K-25 and Y-12 plants.

Following a heart attack in Switzerland in 1980, he served as technical assistant to Presidents Roger F. Hibbs, Ken Jarmolow and Clyde C. Hopkins until retiring in 1986.

In 1983, he headed the independent Mercury Task Force investigating the use of mercury during the lithium separation years of 1955-1962 and its impacts on workers and the environment. During these years, he also introduced and facilitated strategic planning for the Y-12 Plant.

Following retirement, he also served as an independent management consultant

for six more years, specializing in strategic planning for several divisions of the three Department of Energy plants in Oak Ridge, for DOE headquarters in Washington, D.C., the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant and the Oak Ridge school system, as well as other organizations.

During those early working years in Oak Ridge, he continued his education and earned his master's degree in 1958 in industrial management from the University of Tennessee.

Bill was also an active member of the Oak Ridge community, serving on numerous boards including Methodist Medical Center, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Aid to Distressed Families of Appalachian Counties, Citizens for National Security, PTAs, the OE43 Club, the Coalition of Oak Ridge Retired Employees (CORRE) and the Oak Ridge Heritage & Preservation Association. Since its beginning, Bill served his beloved St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in several leadership roles, serving tenures on the vestry and many standing committees. For the past decade, he served as its archivist, having organized its records and compiling the church history. He was also active at the Diocese of East Tennessee, where he served as a member of The Ecclesiastical Court, as well as on committees and commissions. He often represented St. Stephen's as a delegate to diocesan conventions.

As an author, lecturer and historian, Bill reviewed and corrected a chronology of the first 50 years of the Y-12 Plant, written with inputs from more than 20 other Y-12 alumni. The unclassified history of the Y-12 Plant, ³An Overview of the History of Y-12: 1942-1992,² was published by the American Museum of Science and Energy (AMSE) in 2001. Also in 2001, Bill aided producers of the History Channel's Modern Marvels documentary on the ³Manhattan Project² expounding on the history of the Y-12 and K-25 plants. He wrote the proposal to the Rotary Club of Oak Ridge that put together The Secret City Commemorative Walk project to honor institutions, facilities and founders of the Manhattan Project. He was also instrumental in the community-wide effort to save the K-25 ³U² building and the Alexander Inn, and worked tirelessly with the National Park Service to include Oak Ridge in the Manhattan Project National Historic Park with Los Alamos, N.M., and Hanford, Wash.

The Oak Ridge City Council honored Bill in 2006 when he was given the honorary title of Oak Ridge City Historian. He headed the effort to collect oral histories on the Manhattan Project, which are housed at the Oak Ridge Public Library.

He received numerous other awards and honors during his lifetime including the Secretary of Energy's Achievement Award, the Outstanding Service to

Tennessee Tourism award and the East Tennessee Economic Council's Muddy Boot Award. At the September 2012 National Archives of Atlanta symposium titled ³Secret City in the Tennessee Hills: From Dogpatch to Nuclear Power,² Bill received a ³Citizen Archivist² award.

In addition to promoting Secret City history, Bill was an avid writer of his family history and genealogy. He was a longtime student and lectured at Mt. Vernon on George Washington's life portraits. He was a lover of books, butterflies, birds, fishing and was devoted to his family and their lake home on Watts Bar.

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Eugenia ³Jeanie² Holder Wilcox, whom he met and courted in Oak Ridge during World War II; his daughter, Kitty Ellen Soldano and her husband, Dr. Jim Soldano, of Columbus, Ohio; his son William H. ³Bill² Wilcox and his wife, Elizabeth ³Bet² Todd, of Dallas, Texas; his daughter, Martha Wilcox and her husband, Robert ³Bob² McIntyre, of Alexandria, Va.; and by five grandchildren: James W. Soldano, Jennifer Soldano Purcell, William B.T. Wilcox, Ellen E.T. Wilcox and Robert W. ³Rob² Pickle.

Services will begin at 11 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 7, 2013, at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. A reception for family and friends will follow at Pollard Auditorium.

The family asks that memorial donations be made to Aid to Distressed Families of Appalachian Counties, P.O. Box 5953, Oak Ridge, TN 37831 and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church 212 North Tulane Ave. Oak Ridge, TN 37830.

Comments



“ Bill and Family, I was so sad to hear of your dad's passing. I have many wonderful memories of your father during the times I spent with him at work and while we were in High School. My thoughts and prayers are with you and Family during this difficult time.

Louie Finley

Louie Finley - Loudon, TN - Friend - September 12, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ I am so sorry for your loss, Mr. Wilox will truly be missed for he was always a pleasure to work with in preserving Oak Ridge History.

Katatra Vasquez - Oak Ridge , TN - Co-worker - September 10, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ I am so sorry for your loss. I have been working with Bill for about 10 years on efforts to preserve the history of the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge. I have been continually amazed at Bill's ambition, dedication, and passion to preserve this important piece of American and World history. Bill was always a gentleman. He is an truly an inspiration and I will miss him greatly.

Gary Hartman - Knoxville, TN - Friend and co-worker - September 09, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ I am so sorry for your loss. Mr. Wilcox was a wonderful person, and he will be missed by all that knew him.

Sheila Thornton - Harriman, TN - Coworker and Friend - September 09, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ I can never reflect on the place of Oak Ridge in history and my experiences there without thinking of Bill. Whether it was a project for our church or something to enrich the community he was always enthusiastic. It was truly a privilege to know him.

John Reed - Dyersburg, TN - September 06, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ My most heartfelt condolences to you and your family, Kitty. It has been many years since I had seen your Dad in person but followed his efforts in Oak Ridge from distant cities with great interest. I remember him also from his work at St. Stephens years ago. He was an inspiration to those around him.

Mike Robinson.

My Mom and Dad were Jack and Eula Robinson

Michael Robinson - Memphis, TN - Friend - September 05, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ Kitty and Family,

I was so sad to hear of your dad's passing. I have many wonderful memories of your father during the times I spent with your family. My thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Susan Harding Craft

Susan Harding Craft - Marietta, GA - Friend - September 05, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ my thoughts and prayers are with the family at this sad time. you will be missed.

JOHN NAPIER - oak ridge, TN - friend - September 05, 2013 at 12:00 AM