

In Memoriam - Keith Hoyt

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In Memoriam - Keith Hoyt

Charles Keith Hoyt passed away on Friday, March 8, 2013, in QEII Health Sciences Centre in Halifax. Born in North Sydney on April 19, 1921, he was the son of Wilbert V. and Hazel K (Ryder) Hoyt. After high school he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1941, and served as both an instructor while in Canada and as a radar officer overseas where he met his future wife, Patricia "Paddy" Margaret Page, who served in the WAAF.

After extensive service in the United Kingdom, he retired from the Air Force in 1946 as Flight Lieutenant and entered Dalhousie University. He was awarded his BSc with high honours in Physics and the Governor-General's Gold Medal in 1949. In 1950, he earned his MSc degree. During this period, he went back to England and convinced Paddy Page to marry him. Keith then went on to earn a PhD in Physics at MIT in 1954. In 1955, he returned to Dalhousie as Assistant Professor in the Department of Physics.

His initial research interests at Dalhousie included the application of high frequency sound waves to the study of elastic properties of solids such as Argon and copper crystals at low temperatures. In subsequent years his research interests shifted towards astronomy and in particular to an understanding of the properties of the upper atmosphere. In 1966, with the assistance of a grant from the National Research Council of Canada, he helped to develop instrumentation for a rocket-borne experiment to measure the density and energy distribution of upper atmosphere electrons. Keith's main interest, however, was in undergraduate teaching and in particular the teaching of optics. Both faculty and students found Keith an invaluable resource person if they had problems with some optical set up that one could not get to work. Keith's other favorite subjects to teach were electronics, acoustics and modern physics. In his lectures, he insisted on high standards and many of his students can recall the sometimes daunting challenges provided by problem sets in his classical mechanics classes. Keith's enthusiasm for physics easily infected his students and he maintained contact with many of them long after their time at Dalhousie. Keith took the then-mandatory retirement and left Dalhousie as Professor of Physics in 1986.

Keith had a strong interest in music and played the French horn as an amateur musician for many years. He had a great curiosity in, and appreciation for, the natural world, especially animals. Cats of all types and sizes held a special place in his heart and he and Paddy were frequent visitors to the Oaklawn Farm Zoo. Although his vision failed him in later years, he maintained an interest in Ancient Egyptian History, History of the English Language and Theory of Music. Keith kept his keen mind, sharp wit and good sense of humour right to the end.

He is survived by children, Susan (late Lewis) Pickett, Moncton, NB; Brian (Petra Rykers) Hoyt, Stillwater Lake; Louise (Ted) Mussett, Dartmouth, and Allen Hoyt, Montreal; sister, Hazel Braman,

North Sydney; grandchildren, Peter (Jenna) Hoyt, Johanna (Ross Bain) Hoyt, Michelle Mussett, Elliot Mussett and Jonathan Mussett; nieces, Nancy, Deborah and Catherine. Special four-legged friends Bella and Jimmy will miss Keith. Paddy, his wife of 61 years, and his stepbrother, Kaye Lemoine, predeceased him.

Cremation has taken place. No visitation or service by request. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to two organizations strongly supported by Paddy and Keith in the last three decades of their lives: the Bide Awhile Animal Shelter Society, Dartmouth, and Oaklawn Farm Zoo, Aylesford.