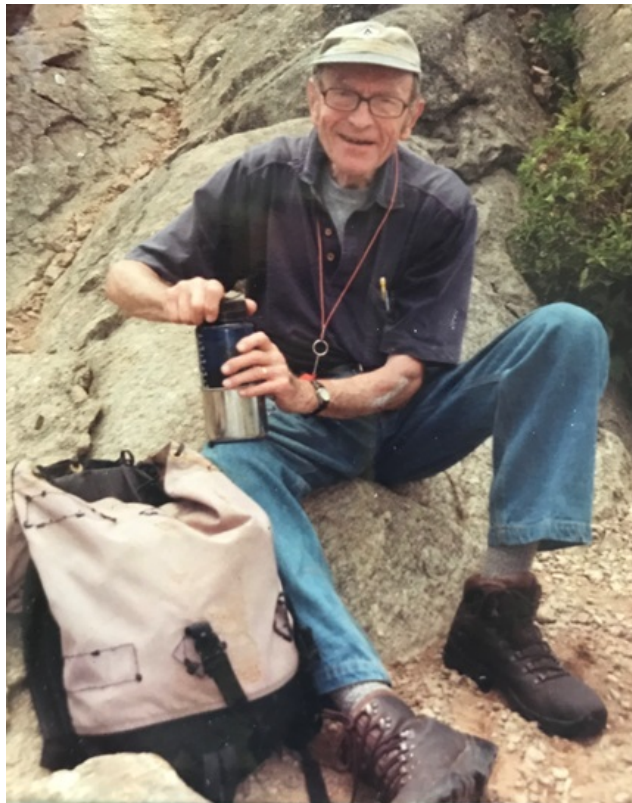


Remembering Henry (Hank) Harman 1925 – 2020



Henry V. “Hank” Harman died on April 19, 2020 in Hyattsville, MD at the age of 94. He died peacefully in his sleep, no doubt dreaming of his beloved Appalachian Trail. Throughout his career as minister, anti-poverty program director, and public administrator, he always made time for hiking. In his mid-80s, the Appalachian Trail Conference videotaped a long conversation with Hank, during which the astonished interviewer realized that this longtime hiker had essentially memorized the entire Appalachian Trail, and could recount it mile by mile, naming every shelter, every water source, every trail relocation, and the dates—starting in 1935—of his hikes along any particular section. By age 15, he was submitting edits and revisions to trail guides and maps. At age 90, the AT Conference and the U.S. Forest Service awarded him its first-ever 75-year service award. A native of Takoma Park, MD, he had been introduced to hiking by that city’s famous 100-year-old Boy Scout Troop 33.

Hank enrolled in the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in 1943. Following graduation, he served aboard the icebreaker Eastwind in Greenland. This lover of mountains led a group

of young officers up a Greenland glacier, but slipping on ice himself, had to be rescued Coast-Guard-human-chain-style by an agile fellow officer who was dangled upside-down over an icy ledge, his ankles grasped by a larger man lying along the top of the ledge, his ankles held in turn by others in the rear. Hank always credited that experience as having been the genesis of his call to the ministry.

Soon thereafter, he married Maxine “Peene” Harman, a Georgia college girl he had met on a train while still in uniform, and together they headed to Yale Divinity School for him to fulfill his glacier-witnessed calling. Seminary was followed by stints in small churches up and down the Shenandoah Valley, a church in a mill town in North Carolina, then in 1959 to York, Pa, by then with four children in tow.

During the 1960s, as minister of York’s Memorial United Church of Christ, Hank became active in community affairs, instrumental in establishing the College Avenue gymnasium for city teens; he also served on the York City School Board for several years. He took a keen interest in the antipoverty movement during that decade and consequently, in 1967, made the decision to leave the parish ministry to become director of York County’s Community Progress Council.

In the wake of York’s racial unrest in 1969, seeking to open channels of communication and mutual understanding among its citizens, Hank and his colleagues at the CPC proposed to convene a ‘charrette’, where citizens would be encouraged to openly air both their grievances and their hopes, especially for improving racial harmony and equity in the city. The York Charrette, which was held almost like a multi-day tent revival in a large downtown warehouse during the spring of 1970, became the site where many Yorkers, for the first time in their lives, sat down with others who did not look like them or think like them, and spoke to and listened to one another. Some of the walls between people began to come down. It was one of Hank’s proudest achievements.

In 1971, he moved to Richmond, VA, to take a position with their Model Cities Program, another outgrowth of the 1960s anti-poverty social movement. A series of severe budget cuts in the late 1980s led to the dissolution of Richmond’s city-sponsored anti-poverty programs. Nevertheless, Hank’s interest in issues facing city governments led him to pursue a doctorate in public administration from Virginia Commonwealth University. He traveled to and interviewed officials in Slovenia, Japan, Poland, and Kenya, and wrote his dissertation comparing their different forms of local governments, earning his PhD at age 68. In retirement, he worked part-time for the Federal Emergency Management Administration as an on-call emergency specialist, helping local governments mitigate the devastation of floods, tornados, and earthquakes.

He also served as president of the Old Dominion Appalachian Trail Club in Richmond, and spent many happy days on his beloved trail with his family and his trail club companions. In recent years, mostly in a wheelchair and unable to hike, his advice to was this: the day comes for all of us to stop hiking, but if you cherish your days on the mountain trails, you’ll be able hike it all over again in your memory. His large collection of trail maps and guidebooks never left his side.

Hank was predeceased by wife Peene and son Richard of Richmond, VA; he is survived by son Peter, Silver Spring, MD; daughters Jane, Takoma Park, MD, and Patricia, Albany, NY; four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. There will be a memorial service, date to be announced, at St. Johns United Church of Christ, Richmond, VA. In the meantime, donations may be made to the Appalachian Trail Conference.