



William Selke

February 25, 2013

William August Selke, of 235 Walker Street, died Tuesday morning at The Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield, as a result of injuries from a fall on the ice on Main Street in Lee, on February 25, 2013.

The son of August F, and Catherine MacAree Selke, he was born on June 16, 1922 in Newburgh, N.Y. As a young child he moved to Poughkeepsie, N.Y., where he lived until going off to college.

He received his undergraduate degree in chemical engineering, from The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with the class of 1943.

He entered the Naval Reserve, and served with a motor torpedo boat squadron in the Pacific theater.

He returned to M.I.T. for a master's degree in 1947, and received a doctorate in engineering from Yale University in 1949.

In 1952, he married Martha Whitney Floyd, a native of Pittsfield, then living in New York. Their weekend trips to the Berkshires introduced him to the many pleasures of the Berkshires, including skiing and Tanglewood.

He joined the faculty of Columbia University, where his research and publications were in the fields of ion exchange kinetics, thermodynamics and heat transfer. In 1951 the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission established its Heat Transfer Research Facility at Columbia. After working for the DuPont Corporation on the design of the Savannah River reactors, Mr. Selke became the manager of that Columbia laboratory.

In 1955, he moved to the Berkshires to establish a research and development department for Peter J. Schweitzer Inc. manufacturer of specialized technical papers. The laboratory was built at a mill site in Lee. The work that he did with his colleagues resulted in a

number of U.S. and foreign patents on specialized papers, and novel applications of the papermaking process. The company was acquired by Kimberly-Clark Corp. in 1982, and was merged with other portions of the company. In 1982, Mr. Selke moved to Atlanta to be Vice president of the Corporate Science and Technology Group.

He retired in 1986, and returned to Stockbridge. From 1986 through 1996, he was a consultant for several major companies, and served as a professor of environmental Engineering at The Lenox Institute for Research. He served as Chairman of a United States committee of the International Standards Organization, and represented that committee at meetings in Beijing and Berlin. He was a member of the board of investment of The City Savings Bank in Pittsfield. In 1966, Mr Selke became a member of the newly formed Massachusetts Board of Education.

More recently, he taught reading and English as a second language with the Southern Berkshire Literacy Network, and read science books for Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic here in the Berkshires..

Mr. Selke served the town of Stockbridge on a number of committees, including chairing an attempt to establish an historic district in Stock bridge Village. He was chairman of the committee on Affordable Housing, which promoted and helped develop the Pine Woods project in Stockbridge. He served on the Planning Board for eight years, and was chairman from 1976 through 1980. He was also a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals. In 1993, he was elected to the Stockbridge Housing Authority, and was a member of the committee which formed the Berkshire Hills Regional School District., and built the Monument Mountain Regional High School. Twenty years later, after retirement, he became a substitute science teacher at that school.

After serving as co-chairman of the Council of Tanglewood Friends in 1974, he became an overseer of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and from 1979 to 1985 served as a trustee of the orchestra. In 1984, while living in Atlanta, he joined the board of The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

He was a member of the boards of The Laurel Hill Association and The Berkshire Museum, and served as president of the Old Corner House-Stockbridge Historical Society, and the Stockbridge library Association. He was a member of the Western Regional Committee of The Trustees of Reservations, and on the Advisory Council of the statewide organization.

He had a lifelong love of music, especially classical music and "good" jazz. He also loved

sailing, and spent a lot of time on the water, both here and in far off lands. He loved traveling. He and his wife saw a good deal of the world together.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Martha; their three sons, W. August Selke of Redmond, Wash., Whitney F. Selke of Lenox, and Edward D. Selke of Atlanta Ga., and a granddaughter, Charlotte P. Selke, who is attending college in Colorado.

FUNERAL NOTICE: A memorial service will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church in Lenox on Monday, March 25, at 2 p.m. There will be no calling hours.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Stockbridge Library or Construct in Great Barrington would be very much appreciated.

Comments



“ Will miss our rides to Monday Evening Club. Bill helped make Stockbridge what it is .

Jack Spencer - December 03, 2015 at 02:53 PM