

Obituary for Harry Coffey (Athens)

June 27 1927 – January 15, 2020

Harry Coffey, son of Harriett Johnson and Jule Coffey, was born in Pomona, California, on June 27, 1927, and died at home on January 15, 2020, in Glouster, Ohio. He had one younger sister, Priscilla.

Harry and his sister began piano lessons at the ages of seven and four and both became accomplished pianists, though only Priscilla pursued playing professionally. Harry was too shy to perform in front of people. He played for his own pleasure for the rest of his life and also sang in choruses, church choirs, and a barbershop group. He attended many concerts and accumulated massive numbers of CDs.

Harry's childhood home was surrounded by citrus groves, and at age 13 he began working and got his license so he could drive a spray truck. He learned carpentry in his father's well-equipped workshop and also became skilled at fixing (and building) cars. Later in his life, he built a house for himself. He was interested in photography and won prizes in county fairs and art shows. While in graduate school, Harry learned about computers, became the IT person for the Cal State system, and eventually opened his own computer repair shop. He loved hiking and camping and walked the Pacific Coast Trail as well as shorter hikes. During World War II, he enlisted in the Navy and spent time at the Naval Great Lakes Training Center.

Harry graduated from California State University at Los Angeles and went on to study at Claremont Graduate School, where he earned a Master's degree and a Ph.D. in psychology. In 1978 he moved to Lewisburg, West Virginia, where he practiced psychology and taught mathematics. He joined a private practice in Vienna, West Virginia, where he worked until he retired. He was always involved in community service and worked in various organizations including the Ohio American Civil Liberties Union and Habitat for Humanity. He was interested in renewable energy, conservation, and monetary policy. Harry never just attended an organization; he engaged fully and became an active member of the boards. Harry was an enthusiastic reader and possessed an extensive library, mostly of books about philosophy, religion, mathematics, ethics, and poetry. He wrote poetry and limericks and was adept at using words.

Harry participated in religious activities during his adult life. He attended a number of churches and eventually settled on the Unitarian Church, first in Marietta and then in Athens. He became dissatisfied in Athens and, out of curiosity, visited the Athens Friends Meeting, where he found his true place. The ethics and activities of the Friends suited his inclinations. The silent meetings appealed to his sense of independence and self-determination and he felt communion with things greater than himself and with the community. He joined a number of committees and was an active participant for the rest of his life. He knew he could meditate in silence at home, but he felt that attending meeting with other people enhanced his sense of connection to a group of like-minded people.

Harry had been married four times before he married Eve Pearson when he was 90. They bought a house in Glouster surrounded by woods and silence, where he was very happy and content. He will be missed by all who knew him during his long and fruitful life.

Memorial piece by Eve Coffey.