



Fred Decker

July 5, 1917 - April 3, 2009

Fred W. Decker, 91, died April 3, in Corvallis, nine days after his wife of 66 years, Charlotte. Born July 5, 1917, in Portland, Oregon, he was the son of John William and Emma Sophia (Schlickeiser) Decker. Fred graduated from Benson Polytechnic High School, and received the Associate in Engineering degree at Multnomah College in Portland. He held a B.S. degree in physics from Oregon State University, a M.S. degree in meteorology from New York University, and a Ph.D. in physics, meteorology, and mathematics from Oregon State University.

Decker served in the U.S. Weather Bureau at stations in Oregon and California before WWII, advancing to professional status as an airways and general service forecaster at San Francisco. On leave from the Weather Bureau, he served on the faculty of New York University at the start of WWII, teaching future AAF weather officers. As an activated Air Corps reservist, his training assignments and service were as a liaison officer for research and development for Headquarters, Army Air Force. Post war, he continued as an active Air Force reservist, advancing through professional schools and assignments to retire as a Lieutenant Colonel of the Air Force Reserve. Professor Decker joined the Oregon State University faculty in 1946 and served until 1981, where he taught courses in engineering physics, astronomy, climatology and theoretical and applied meteorology. He led a teaching and research program that led to the establishment of the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at OSU. Dr. Decker wrote over 80

papers, reports and articles plus books including “The Weather Workbook”, “Weather Map Study”, and “Science Travel Guide”. He continuously taught meteorological courses by correspondence for the Office of Independent Study of the Oregon State System of Higher Education. He frequently appeared in court as an expert witness as a forensic meteorologist.

Dr. Decker served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Education, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, from September 1981 to May 1985, playing a leading role in management and policy of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Dr. Decker was an active member and leader of professional societies, including the American Meteorological Society and the American Association of Physics Teachers, and Chairman of the Math-Physics Section of the Oregon Academy of Science. He was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Royal Meteorological Society. He belonged to the international scholarly Mont Pelerin Society, national Philadelphia Society, and regional Mt. Hood Society. He helped found the University Professors for Academic Order (UPAO).

Dr. Decker traveled and lectured internationally, including a period as a visiting research associate at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich and at the Institute for Physics of the Atmosphere in Munich. He and Charlotte traveled in Europe repeatedly and around the Pacific rim on family and professionally-associated trips, throughout the Northwest to gather forensic data for potential weather-related court cases and enjoyed cruises to Alaska and Central America/Panama Canal just for fun.

Decker was active in local Corvallis issues. He served in various posts in the Boy Scouts of America, including that of Scoutmaster. A veteran member of Toastmasters International, he won the highest award given in Speech Evaluation competition and served in various offices. He led in Republican Party campaigns, starting as a student campaigner in 1932. He was a prolific writer of Letters to the Editor. He actively participated in several Masonic fraternal bodies, include Lodge #14, and as a church layman.

Following the death of both of his parents, documents in their belongings led

to successful attempts to contact with cousins in The Netherlands and Switzerland during travels in Europe. Swiss cousins supplied information that led to an Oregon-based discovery that his previously-unknown great aunt was the first woman lawyer in Oregon.

We three children remember Dad's daily interest in education. Dinner conversations always included a query of our school day activities.

Occasionally, foreign students at OSU joined our dinner table and brought a more global perspective to the evening discussion.

Fred will be fondly remembered by his friends and neighbors as a backyard horticulturist. He experimented with grafting many additional varieties of apples onto a tree that began with five varieties, tried multiple varieties of table grape vines, enjoyed the bounty of an Italian plum tree and shared many cuttings from a pair of holly trees, especially in winters when the trees produced berries beyond belief. He enjoyed the backyard garden produce, especially when the vegetable or fruit made a good combination with a huge scoop of cottage cheese.

Dad loved a bargain. Three or four of an item came home when the price was right. He learned thrift and reuse/repurpose of items through his youth.

Composting and recycling came naturally in a household with a father who grew up in the Depression years.

Preceded in death by his wife Charlotte, his parents and his brother who died in infancy. Fred is survived by his daughter, Jane of Tucson, AZ; son and daughter in law Bill and Janet Decker of Sunnyvale, CA; daughter and son in law Rainy and Gene Takalo of Damascus, OR; 4 granddaughters; one grandson; 2 great grandsons; sister in law; 1 niece and 1 nephew.

The family requests memorial donations in Fred's name be directed to the following: New York University Alumni Association; Dean's Fund for Excellence, College of Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences at Oregon State University; or the Oregon Trail Council of the Boy Scouts of America in care of McHenry Funeral Home, 206 NW 5th St., Corvallis, OR 97330. A Memorial

Service will be held at 2:00 pm Saturday, April 18th at Grace Lutheran Church
435 NW 21st St. Corvallis, Oregon.

Tribute Wall

BC

“ Dear Decker Family: I was so sad to hear of the passing of Dr. Decker, my friend and mentor for many years. I met Fred through the Benton County Republican Central Committee. He was a strong force, working to instill conservative principles in the next generation of statesmen for Oregon. I was privileged to be able to continue on to political office in the Oregon House of Representatives, where Fred and I wrote several bills together and where he and Charlotte came to testify before legislative committees. He and I would often talk on the phone about the Reagan years and World War II so that I would know and understand the history of the political struggles we were in. It helped me immensely. He was a strong and unselfish warrior who always gave his time to the young people behind him, advising The College Republicans well into old age. He was a champion of the written word in the newspaper as well. "Well done thy good and faithful servant". May God rest his soul.

Betsy Close - April 19, 2009 at 12:15 PM

CS

“ My condolences to the family of Fred and Charlotte. I appreciated knowing Fred and his dedication to The Mt. Hood Society.

Charles Sauvie - April 17, 2009 at 01:17 PM

DB

“ Dear Family: Lois and I always enjoyed good visits with Fred and Charolotte at AMS meetings in the 1960's and 1970's as we shared church commonality as Lutheran Christians. Professionally, Fred taught an evening class in Portland in Dynamic Meteorology to help a group of government employees there improve their professional standing. He was a great encourager of all in the meteorological and environmental fields. He will be remembered with fondness and appreciation. Dave and Lois Bauman

Dave and Lois Bauman - April 16, 2009 at 10:44 PM

DB

“ Fred was a pillar of the Corvallis Masonic Lodge and served as Marshal during my year in the East. He was a generous person who will be missed by all who knew him and whose lives he touched.

David R. Beach - April 16, 2009 at 11:00 AM