



## Henry Paul Chrostowski

March 4, 1927 - November 28, 2020

Henry Paul Chrostowski was born in Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania in 1927. At the age of only three he was orphaned and spent the next thirteen years in the Paradise School for Boys; a Catholic institution where he grew up with his four brothers: Edward, Bernard, Walter, and Joseph. He had two sisters: Edna and Alice, who were also sent to a school for girls. It was a hardscrabble upbringing where they worked the farm that supplied their food and provided for their upkeep. The vigorous work was interrupted by the strict schooling of the nuns and whatever mischief young boys could find in the fields, equipment, and structures of a depression-era farm. He often commented about his time growing up there with fondness; explaining that they knew no other life as they had nothing else for comparison, and so they were happy. Nonetheless, Hank's commitment to a lifetime of generosity, kindness, and concern for his children can easily be attributed to those years of privation he remembered from his own upbringing.

When young Hank reached the age of 14, he, like his brothers before him, had to leave the school. He was taken in by his then-married sister, Edna, and her husband to attend William Cullen Bryant High School in Queens, Long Island. Hank was especially proud of his summer jobs as a life guard at the World's Fair and as a roller-skating instructor - a skill he kept for life that quite surprised his children when they first visited a roller-rink as a family! The Second World War interrupted his time on Long Island when his brother-in-law

went to work in the Boston Ship Yards and the family relocated to Marblehead, Massachusetts. He graduated high school there at 17 and promptly joined the Navy. Hank's naval service included both WWII and the Korean Conflict where he served upon refueling ships; dangerous work that involved lashing together two large ships in sometimes heavy seas with large steel cables straining under load as tons of flammable fuel was pumped from the tanker to another warship. On one such occasion, a last cable was not properly removed from a cleat, and before Hank could reach it, snapped - sending him flying through the air and nearly severing his leg below the knee. It was a long recovery that required surgery at Naval hospital to save his limb. He never let it slow him down, but he would forever more label it his "bad" leg.

After his first discharge he, like so many veterans, went on to college. First, for one year at the University of Miami (simply too hot!), and then to Oregon State College in Corvallis (OSU today) where he graduated with a degree in wildlife biology with an emphasis on fisheries. He was recalled to duty for the Korean War, and afterward began his career as a biologist for the Fish and Wildlife Service in the territory of Alaska. His adventures in the Alaskan wilderness are too numerous to capture here, but to say he lived the life of a daring outdoorsman is an understatement! He spent weeks in the field dropping in by float plane with little more than a backpack, rifle, and camera. His hours of 16mm movies document close encounters with Kodiak bears, moose, and wolves as traveled by plane to check on salmon weirs, habitat risks, game studies, and the occasional poacher. When asked about his time in Alaska, Hank would never hesitate to attest that his greatest adventure of all was meeting an intrepid young woman from Two Harbors, Minnesota who came to Alaska to meet her own destiny. He met his wife-to-be, Vivien, in Anchorage and they were married after a courtship of letters and brief interludes together. He progressed to be the Supervisor of the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands. After statehood, he went on to Washington, DC as the Defense Fishery Coordinator.

Ten years of war game planning burned him out, and he took a position with the US Forest Service in Provo, Utah where he could once again work in the great outdoors on foot or on horseback documenting biodiversity risks and creating mitigation plans. In his last role, he transferred to the Siuslaw National Forest in Corvallis, Oregon before retiring in 1982. His final years were spent at Stoneybrook Assisted Living where he was regarded as the "Heart of Stoneybrook." He joyously sang "Happy Birthday" to each resident and staff member and entertained in every production and parade. He helped new comers learn their way around, knew (and used) the name of every staff member, brought joy to all of their activities, and made sure the smallest mundane gesture was always rewarded with a heartfelt "thank you" and a small chocolate. Our family sends our deepest heartfelt gratitude to the staff and residents of Stoneybrook who so enriched the final years of Hank's life.

He lived life on his own terms; loved deeply and well; and was hard-working, generous, and kind. He put his family first, and set a powerful example of how to live life fully and joyfully. Many great family vacations were spent traveling the West with a camper on the truck and a boat in tow sharing his knowledge of the land he knew so well. He loved bird hunting with his black lab, Lightning, along with fishing, and big game hunting. He was his truest self in the great outdoors.

He was a life-long fan of Oregon State sports and celebrated all of their wins. In addition, Hank was an accomplished card player at Cribbage, Black Jack, and Poker. He was always up for a trip to the casino and was very proud of playing with the house's money for all these years.

Hank was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Vivien Violet (Carlson) Chrostowski.

He is survived by his four children: Carol Jean (Chrostowski) Sabin and her husband, Scott; Andrew Edward Chrostowski and his wife, Susan and; Karen Gay (Chrostowski) Smolin and her husband, Howard; Steven Carl Chrostowski, and their families. He has four grandchildren: Kiersten Marie (Sabin) Moore, Anika Kristine (Sabin) Spalin, Gregory Scott Sabin, and Alexandra Eve Chrostowski. His first great grandchild is Siriana Marie Spalin. Hank loved his step grandchild, Stephen "Duke" Wayne Smolin and his wife Brooklyn (Friesen) Smolin who welcomed their first child, Benny "Ben" Dean Michael Smolin just last year.

He was a loving husband, and proud father, grandfather, and great grandfather. Hank's life will be celebrated at a wake to be held at the McHenry Funeral Home on Wednesday, December 9, 2020 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and at a funeral mass on Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. in St. Mary's Catholic Church in Corvallis. He will be interred at Willamette Valley National Cemetery with full Naval military honors on Friday, December 11, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

Anyone who wishes to honor Hank is asked to make a donation to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital ([www.stjude.org](http://www.stjude.org)) in his name.

# Tribute Wall



“ *McHenry Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Henry Paul Chrostowski*



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**McHenry Funeral Home** - December 07, 2020 at 07:09 PM



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**McHenry Funeral Home** - December 07, 2020 at 07:09 PM

DH

“ I first worked with Hank on the Siuslaw NF when I was a coop ed student at OSU starting in 1978 and he was the Fish and Wildlife staff officer. Hank sort of took me under his wing even after I was converted to a permanent employee. He had a lot of experience that he was willing to share with me especially to explain how the budget worked in the Forest Service and how to put project proposals for funding together, advice that I used throughout my FS career. He was such a nice guy and always trying to help me further my education on life in the Forest Service. Of course he retired soon after that and I lost track of him in the ensuing years. I have very fond memories of Hank, his kindness and his willingness to help out a newbie in the Forest Service. My condolences to Hank's family and friends.

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**David Hohler** - December 06, 2020 at 08:35 PM

AC

David, thanks for sharing your memories of my father. I really appreciate it. Dad touched a lot of lives and it is great to hear of another one. Warmest Regards, Andrew

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**Andrew Chrostowski** - December 27, 2020 at 03:51 PM

TM

“ Henry and I connected when my Rotary club started writing letters/cards to seniors in Caring facilities in Corvallis. I put my return address on my card and Henry wrote me back. I was so excited to learn about his life, his family, and his military background. On He wrote me several cards and was so grateful to have had an opportunity to spend time at the coast with his family earlier this year. I was so sad to hear of his passing when I tried to drop off some Christmas cheer this week. I wish that I could have met him in person. He had so many beautiful memories that he shared in his cards to me. I'm grateful that he shared his memories with me. Sending love to his family.

*Tammy Morrison*

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**Tammy Morrison** - December 04, 2020 at 12:42 PM

AC

*Thank you for your kindness, Tammy.*

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**Andrew Chrostowski** - December 27, 2020 at 03:49 PM

LH

“ Hank was such a kind and inspiring person who led a life very rich in experience and emotional connection. We so enjoyed his company, humor, wise counsel, and quiet presence. Andrew, Susan, and Alex - our thoughts, condolences and love are with you at this time.

*Lisa and Kerry Hodne - Buffalo MN*

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**Lisa Hodne** - December 02, 2020 at 06:01 PM

AC

*Thank you so much, Lisa and Kerry.*

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**Andrew Chrostowski** - December 02, 2020 at 08:37 PM