

CHAPEL HILL -- Charles Heinmiller, 85, went to be with his Lord on Christmas, 2009 from his residence at Carolina House of Chapel Hill.

Charles Samuel Heinmiller was born in Tampa, Florida, the only surviving child of Samuel and Alberteen Heinmiller. Charles began playing piano in preschool, and he performed and won awards throughout his adolescence. In his teens and in college Charles played piano and trombone in dance bands and school bands. At the age of 5 Charles was selected for a boy's choir, and he sang tenor in church choirs for most of his life. During his college days at Chapel Hill, he joined the glee club as well as the band. While performing with the glee club on a visit to Randolph Macon Women's College, he met Elizabeth Johnston Hopkins, whom he married in 1951. Their home and hearts were always filled with music.

Charles received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in physics at UNC Chapel Hill. He was a lieutenant in the Air Force during WWII, working as a weatherman in the Pacific. In 1950 he began a career at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, N.Y. that lasted until he retired at age 65 in 1989. At Kodak Charles worked on projects ranging from the Lunar Orbiter program and the photography of the moon landing to pioneering work with microfilm and microfiche. He also managed a physics research laboratory at Kodak. One of his favorite activities each year was judging at the National Science Fair, and he was always impressed with the imagination and expertise of American youth. Charles was active in the Society of Photographic Scientists and Engineers, including a term as chair of Rochester chapter. After he retired and moved to Chapel Hill, he continued to pursue academic interests by attending classes for seniors at DILIR and UNC.

Charles Heinmiller was a committed Christian who rose early every morning to spend time reading God's word and praying. He believed it was important to give time and talent as well as tithes to build up the church. He taught Sunday school, both to youth and to adults. He was elected to the vestry and served as warden for many years in the Episcopal church in New York. At the Presbyterian Church of the Good Shepherd in Chapel Hill, Charles served as an elder, Clerk of the Session, and Treasurer. He led Bible studies and participated in or led home study and prayer groups. In particular he was committed to evangelism. For often Charles served on evangelism committees and commissions as well as helping to prepare for Billy Graham's crusades

in the region. In the 1970s he took part in and later became a coordinator of Faith Alive weekends, a program that brought lay witnesses to churches for a weekend of testimony and discussion. In the 1980s Charles trained with the national program of Evangelism Explosion. He always carried a cross in his pocket as a prompt to share the gospel message with those around him.

Charles volunteered in the community from the time he was a boy scout. He actively supported the struggle for civil rights in 1960s. He enjoyed his many years on the board of the public library and working for Habitat for Humanity. After retiring to Chapel Hill, Charles volunteered each week at the local men's shelter. He was also president of his homeowner's association. Charles thought citizenship was a duty as well as a right, and so on election days he would rouse the family early to vote as soon as the polls opened at 6 a.m. His one stipulation for financing his children's undergraduate education was to insist that they take a semester of economics, which he said was necessary to be an informed voter.

Charles was a good dancer and was always physically fit. During his career he frequently spent lunch hours exercising at a local health club. After retirement, he regularly went on long walks. Although a highly self-disciplined man, Charles loved to read so much that he would sometimes stay up much too late because he couldn't put down a book. He was gentle and patient, even while helping his daughters practice piano, assisting them with homework, and teaching them to drive. His colleagues and family never once heard him utter profanity or a vulgar word, though he was renowned for a quick wit and a vibrant sense of humor. Family dinners were always a time of sharing, discussion, and laughter. Charles enjoyed people, and people enjoyed being with him.

Alzheimer's disease was an increasing presence in the last 10 to 12 years of his life. When Charles' warm smile and all the other aspects of his mind and personality were gone, what remained was his very essence: a calm, gentle, and sweet man who would hum a few bars of music almost to the very end.

Charles Heinmiller is survived by his wife of 58 years, Elizabeth Heinmiller; two daughters and sons-in-law, Nancy and Ron McInnes and Mary Gene and Kevin Hennessy; and one beloved grandchild,

Aidan Conrad Hennessy.

A memorial service will be held at the Church of the Good Shepherd on Thursday, December 31 at 2 p.m.

The family asks that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Cynthia Parkey Fund of First in Families of NC, which provides scholarships for the unique supports and future planning for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities and their families. Checks can be mailed to Betsy MacMichael at: First in Families of North Carolina, 524 S. Duke Street, Durham, NC 27701. Online donations can be made at:

<http://www.firstinfamiliesofnc.org/funding/donate.html>