



Philip James Spear

August 30, 2013

Philip J. Spear, age 98, retired entomologist and trade association executive, died on Wednesday, August 28, 2013 at ShandsHospital. His wife of 65 years, the former Hazel Blackburn of StonehamMA, died June 10, 2008. His survivors include: son Philip J. Spear Jr. and wife Marynelle of Haverford PA and Williamstown MA, son Dr. Brian B. Spear and wife Kathleen of Winnetka IL and Boulder CO and daughter, Dr. Laurel Bernstein and husband Dr. Sanford Bernstein of San Diego CA, a nephew, Wallace MacLean of Charlemont, MA, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Dr. Spear was born September 5, 1914 in Springfield, MA but spent his boyhood on a small general farm in Charlemont, MA. The early years on the farm with his father, a self-taught naturalist, were often mentioned as among the more important parts of his total education. He did attend public schools in Charlemont and in 1937 earned a bachelor's degree in entomology from the then Massachusetts State College. Before and after WWII he worked in New England and California in termite control. In 1948 he returned to the University of Massachusetts for graduate study in entomology leading to a PhD in 1953. During this time he was also Director of the Laboratory of American Aerovap, Inc. which investigated vaporization of insecticides. Byproducts of this work included two U.S. patents and a bibliography for the U. S. Army.

During WWII he was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army and served about a year as platoon leader in the 594th Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. At the end of February 1944 he was transferred to the Army Transportation Corps as Commander of the 334th Harbor Craft Company. A month later that company began movement overseas where it trained briefly at Liverpool and Portsmouth, England before moving successively to Omaha Beach, Isigny-sur-Mer and Rouen, France. After the war he had duty as entomologist in a Research and Development Group of the Medical Service Corps, U.S. Army Reserve from which he retired in 1957 with rank of Major.

In 1954 Dr. Spear was employed as Technical Director of the National Pest Control Association (NPCA), the trade association of the urban pest management industry in the United States. At that time workers, seeking to control pests in homes and businesses, had great need for sound information about safe and effective use of the many new chemicals that had been developed in wartime. He gathered and communicated to practical workers in the field the useful results of research. Communication was accomplished in workshops throughout the country and by publication of scores of Technical Releases. He alerted state, federal and commercial workers to the information needs of the industry and organized funding to support research. These activities lead to opportunities to work with numerous panels and committees of national and international bodies. As Senior Director Research, he opened NPCA's Washington, D.C. office in 1972 to strengthen communication with federal regulatory and legislative bodies. He continued this work, which required registration as a lobbyist, until his retirement in 1980.

Dr. Spear was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville and served it in a number of leadership positions. He was a member of the Entomological Society of America and Sigma Xi and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1938 he was awarded a Carnegie Medal for Heroism for saving the life of a fisherman who had been washed into the sea at York Beach, Maine.

Always interested in nature, he was a fisherman, avid bird watcher, and in later life, a gardener who constantly sought to add variety and appeal to the plantings about his home.

Donations may be made to: UUF Foundation, 4225 NW 34th St., Gainesville, FL32605.

Tribute Wall

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“ My condolences to the family on the loss of this exceptional man. Although I never met him in person, I got a memorable impression of him from a phone conversation when I was surveying members of the Alachua County League of Women Voters several years ago. When asked if he cared to become more active in the League, he apologized that, due to his being 97 years old, about all he could do was write letters. I was amazed that, at that age, he was still so interested in the general wellbeing and willing to continue to invest his energies. We will recognize his passing in our September newsletter.

Kathy Kidder - September 07, 2013 at 12:03 PM

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“ I too thought Grampy would live forever. I am heartbroken that he is no longer with us. Even though we are not related by blood, he treated me like a granddaughter and made me feel truly loved. I was so honored to know him and I am so pleased that he was able to meet and love his great grandson Desmond. I can't wait to tell Desmond all about his great Grampy. One day I will read to him from Grampy's autobiography and show him pictures from when he first met Grampy. Desmond is lucky to have descended from such an intelligent, honorable and loving great grandfather. I miss you Grampy.

Kelly Spear - September 05, 2013 at 11:20 AM

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“ He had us all fooled into thinking he would live forever. I know he was 98, but it's hard to believe he has left, seemingly so quickly. I feel so blessed to have known him for the past 6 years. Not only was he a very accomplished person, but he was a thinker with a fair and kind heart, a hard worker who, since I've known him (and I'm sure before), wanted to live the highest quality of life he could and was willing to do what needed to be done to get there. He was a life-long learner, interested in keeping up with computer technology, current events, and social progression. He recently finished his autobiography and had started writing another. He was a humble man and someone who saw the best in others but was not fooled by the superficial. He made it clear that at this point in his life, he did not want to be called "Mr.", "Captain", or "Dr.". He wanted to be called "Phil". He loved his family; he loved and cared about others in his life; he cared about the future generations. I am so proud to have been able to call him a friend. He was so proud of his family, he loved you very much, and I know he felt loved and supported by his family. I'm sending love and support to his family.

Katie Browder - September 01, 2013 at 06:01 AM