

George Muha

February 13, 2020

George Muha, a professor emeritus of chemistry at Rutgers University and a longtime member of the Metuchen YMCA's amateur radio club, died Feb.13 after a lengthy illness. He was 88.

George grew up in Metuchen, where he was an Eagle Scout and worked in his family's school-photography business. After graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Lehigh University with a degree in chemistry, he served as a radar-repair specialist in the U.S. Army, achieving the rank of first lieutenant. Upon reentering civilian life, he earned a doctorate from Rutgers and worked briefly for RCA and Esso before joining the faculty at Rutgers, where he taught chemistry on Piscataway's Busch Campus for nearly 30 years.

Through a radio club sponsored by the Metuchen YMCA, he also volunteered to teach Morse Code to high school students interested in obtaining their licenses, though he'd never gotten around to getting his own. When students called him out on it, he sat for the test on the spur of the moment and passed all three levels on the same day, a feat so rare that it made the newspaper. He remained an active ham radio operator until a few weeks before his death.

In retirement, George became interested in genealogy, tracing his family back to its roots in pre-World War I Hungary. He also toured the country photographing non-directional beacons at regional airports, arguing that these radio transmitters, used as navigational aids for aircraft, should be documented for the historical record before satellite systems made them obsolete. The hobby got him into occasional scrapes, such as the time he attempted to photograph a beacon at a government airport and found himself surrounded by police cars. (He charmed his way out of the situation, but never did get a picture of that particular beacon.)

George is survived by his wife; a daughter and two sons; his son- and daughter-in-law; his son's partner; his brother, sister and brother-in-law; numerous nieces and nephews, and his grandson, who should probably come first on this list, since he was all George talked about.

Services will be private. Memorial contributions may be sent to the George Muha Research Fellowship, established in 2015 to support promising chemistry students at The College of New Jersey, 2000 Pennington Road, Ewing, NJ 08628, or to the Deborah Hospital Foundation of the Deborah Heart & Lung Center, 212 Trenton Road, Browns Mills, N.J., 08015, where the nurses in the intensive care unit are angels who greatly eased his final days.