

Clyde Hopkins: Stories of the man, the manager

(As published in *The Oak Ridge's Historically Speaking* column on November 18, 2014)

In Monday's paper, Carolyn Krause began the story of Clyde Hopkins, a well-known Oak Ridge resident and president of the Martin Marietta Group before he retired in 1995 after a 43-year career.

Hopkins, 85, died Oct. 29 at Methodist Medical Center of Oak Ridge. Today, Krause shares some more stories about Hopkins.

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The Rev. Troy Forrester, associate pastor, First United Methodist Church: "To focus on Clyde's business success is to completely miss who he was. He was good to you, he was kind to you.

"He was the same whether he was dealing with the people he worked with or whom he was working for. He invested in others.

"He did not take himself seriously. He liked to have a good time. He made the most of every moment of life he was given."

Clark Milner, his older grandson, has a law degree from UT and works in Nashville: "I was seven when he retired in 1995. He had a great impact on Grant and me. He was selfless; he put his time and energy into his grandsons.

"I remember sitting on his knee and watching a football game. I remember playing Putt Putt with him in Oak Ridge. We played rounds of golf with him. (Grant won a golf scholarship to the University of Memphis.)

"He was the first member of his family to go to college. He lived a full life. He taught me to work hard, apply myself, and show respect to people. He was an extraordinary grandfather.

"But I can't say I appreciated it when I was younger when he sang 'O what a beautiful morning' to me to wake me up."

Bob Merriman: For Oak Ridge work colleagues of Clyde who were with him in out-of-state locations, the two most dreaded words were "Follow me." When they were in two or more rental cars in Washington, D.C. or elsewhere and didn't know how to get to a meeting in the area, Clyde would say, "Follow me." He would drive fast, turn after turn. They followed him but it was not always easy. Now, when they think about the exemplary life he lived, "follow me" will be a treasured mantra in their minds.

Bill Martin: "Clyde and Ada were among eight families that formed an investment club in the 90s. We met monthly at the home of one of the families. After a business time, we enjoyed a social time with a tasty dessert provided by the host family. Clyde and Ada were always kind, gracious hosts. We decided early on that we had no time to let green bananas ripen, so we named our group the Green Banana Investment Club. Our social returns outweighed our investment returns."

Bill Martin: "Clyde liked to eat at certain restaurants. One Sunday morning after church, my wife and I invited Clyde and Ada to go out to lunch with us. They agreed. I offered to drive. 'Where would you like to go?' I asked. 'The Pancake House in Gatlinburg,' Clyde said.

"I took the back and scenic roads from Oak Ridge through Maryville and inside the national park. After almost two hours, we arrived on the main street of Gatlinburg.

"Clyde told me where to park to get close to the restaurant. Then he got us around the waiting line. That was the longest drive I ever made to get lunch after church, but we enjoyed every minute of it."

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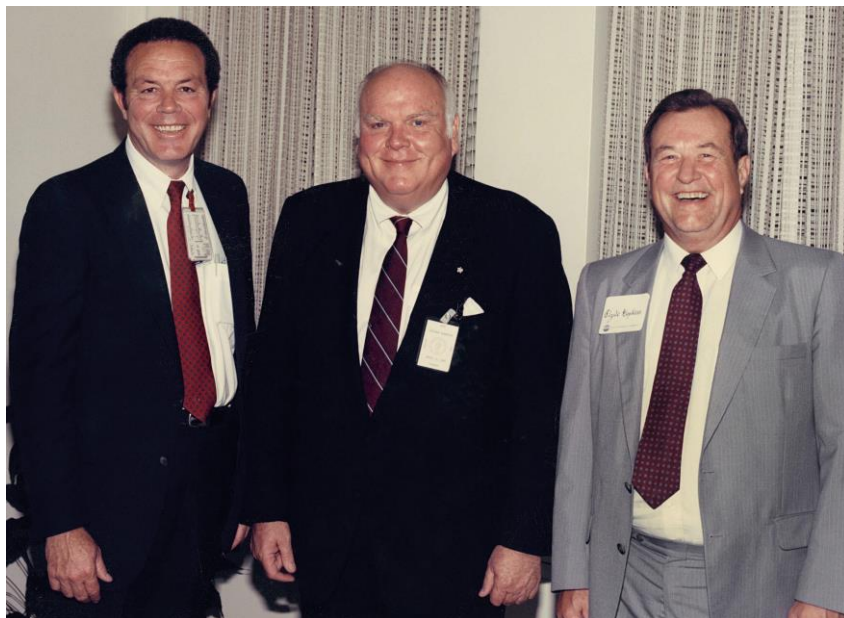
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I hope you enjoyed Carolyn's reflections on Clyde Hopkins. He was a huge asset to Oak Ridge whether it was managing the people in the largest workforce in the area or working on the various boards of directors on which he served. Clyde Hopkins will be missed by his family and friends and even those who did not know him personally will miss the kindness he showed to all he met.

To recall Clyde Hopkins is to recall kindness, smiles, friendly hugs, a fun filled life and a dedicated man of intense convictions which guided his daily life. I miss him.



Clyde Hopkins with U.S. Sen. Jim Sasser and DOE-ORO manager J Joe LaGrone in 1988



Joe LaGrone, Gov. Ned McWherter and Clyde Hopkins