

Pat Hope: Award-winning poet, fiction & nonfiction writer and writers group founder

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on October 18, 2017)

This Historically Speaking column was researched by Sue Fredrick and edited by Carolyn Krause. It has been my pleasure to know Pat through the Friends of Oak Ridge Public Library where we have both been on the board for a number of years. Enjoy being introduced to Pat Hope, another icon of Oak Ridge.

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Pat Hope is one of the many consummate Southern ladies I count among the unsung heroines and leaders in arts and letters in the Secret City. I met her in 2014 at the first meeting of the Friends of the Library Book Group I attended. Pat introduced herself and handed me a roster of club members, all of whom were women except for Cecil Higgins (who died last year).

She also had me introduce myself to the other members. Because I was "the new kid in town" at the time, having moved here from California, I was still unaware of the talent that surrounded me. If I recall correctly, the first selection I read for the Friends of the Oak Ridge Public Library group was from Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe."

The Classic Book Club of the Oak Ridge Institute for Continued Learning, which I had also just joined, discussed "The Once and Future King" by T. H. White. So, in March 2014, I learned way more than I'm sure I'd ever wanted or needed to know about Medieval England and its history.

As time passed, and we read more books together, I discovered that many of my fellow readers were published authors, including our fearless yet gentle leader, Pat Hope. I learned that she also held a full-time job as a marketing specialist with Emerson Process Management in Knoxville.

I was curious to know how she found the time and inspiration to do a mundane job and yet pursue a totally separate and fanciful avocation. What raised my admiration for her was that when I met her in March 2014, she was on bereavement leave after the death of her husband of 52 years, Chuck Hope, Sr.

Here, then, is her story, which shows how Pat fit so well into both the practical and creative local communities in Oak Ridge. It might also explain how this Roane County native lost some of the beautiful lilt that I often recognize among other East Tennessee natives!

Patricia Ann (Pat) Bane Hope was born in Roane County in August 1947. She is the oldest of four girls in a family of five children. Pat's mother, now in her mid-80s, was just 15 years old when Pat was born. Pat herself was 14 when she married Chuck Hope, a Harriman native who was nine years her senior, in 1962.

The youngest of 10 children, Chuck grew up in Oliver Springs until his family moved inside the fence in Oak Ridge where Chuck's dad got a job.

Meanwhile, Chuck himself joined the Army in 1953, but was kicked out when he was found to be too young. A couple of years later, when he was 17, his parents signed him up to join the Army. Chuck served as a medic in the Far East, including Japan and Korea, and in Germany.

Along the way, he learned to work on cars and trucks, and upon leaving the Army in 1961, he began working as a mechanic. Clearly, Chuck gained some independence and skills through his Army experience that would serve him and succeeding generations well.

Shortly after they married, Chuck and Pat moved to Chicago. Their stay in that harsh and windy city was short but memorable. Chuck Jr. was born there; he is now the owner of Chuck's Car Care in Oak Ridge and a twice-elected member of the Oak Ridge City Council.

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The Hopes once were robbed while they slept! After that the family became slightly nomadic, moving back to Oak Ridge in 1963 and then to Jacksonville, Fla., where their second son Roger was born. They moved again to West Palm Beach, where their third son Terry was born.

In 1971, they moved to Oak Ridge but stayed only six months before heading back to West Palm Beach to be closer to Chuck's father, recently widowed. In 1975, after his dad's death, Chuck moved his family back to Oak Ridge for good. "We rented the same house on Waltham Place in both 1971 and 1975," Pat said. "Eventually, we bought it."

The first years of their marriage were busy and eventful, especially for Pat. In Florida, Pat finished high school, obtaining a GED that put her in the top one-fourth of the nation's seniors. Then she started taking some community college courses.

After their move to Tennessee, she continued to work a full-time job, and for the first time, took some writing classes. Chuck established himself in the community as an expert mechanic, working for many local car dealers before opening a car lot and garage.

At one point he operated a mobile car care service, until finally founding Chuck's Car Center in the early 1980s. This "family business," in its final form, is now an Oak Ridge institution on the west end of town. Chuck's Car Care is owned by Chuck Hope, Jr., who has been a local businessman for more than 30 years.

While the Hope boys were otherwise occupied, Pat did not sit idly by. She continued her education and started writing articles, poems and stories and entering them in contests. While continuing to take workshops and courses in both journalism and creative writing throughout the 1980s, Pat kept her pen flying over paper. Chuck Sr. had always told Pat that she could do anything she set her mind to do.

She was a reporter and news editor for *the Roane County News* from 1985 through 1992, one of only 35 women editors in the entire state. Pat also co-wrote and published a travel guide to East Tennessee ["Joy in the Mountains" (1982)], won a Tennessee Press Association Award (1988) and was selected as Tennessee Outdoor Writers Association's Writer of the Year (1987-88). She has won more than 200 awards for her writing.

Although she regrets not earning a college degree, Pat did finish numerous courses over the years. Many of the courses were with local colleges such as Roane State Community College, where she took courses in everything from public speaking to editing.

In 1989, she helped start Creative Writing Services and Publishing Company with the late Hayden Evans upon his retirement from the banking industry. Together, over the next six years, Pat and Hayden offered their experience and expertise by creating a wide variety of publications, including articles, brochures, pamphlets, books, press releases, and other promotional items for individuals and businesses.

Pat and Hayden also co-founded the Oak Ridge-based Tennessee Mountain Writers, Inc., in 1989 and held the first writing conference in this area. Pat served as its executive director for 14 years. The conference is held every spring and attracts dozens of area writers to its workshops and contests.

In the 1990s she served as president of the East Tennessee Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (1992). She also taught creative writing for Roane State's Continuing Education (non-credit) program and served on the advisory board of the Dixie Council of Authors & Journalists. Pat contributed to the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge publications, including "An Appalachian Studies Teacher's Manual" and "An Encyclopedia of East Tennessee."

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Pat's work has appeared in dozens of newspapers including The Oak Ridger and the Knoxville News Sentinel. Her self-syndicated column "Tennessee Trips & Tips" appeared in both The Oak Ridger and the Lenoir City News-Herald.

She received the American Cancer Society's statewide Best Media Coverage Award (1991) and Roane County Chamber of Commerce's Athena Award for "Outstanding Business Woman of the Year" (1990). She also published her second book, a guide to writing for small-town newspapers ["Writing for your Home-Town Newspaper" (1994)].

With all this varied writing experience under her belt, and following that inner voice that told her she could make a living as a writer, Pat jumped into the local technology scene by taking some technical writing and editing courses and starting a job with IT Corporation as a technical editor in 1995. She then became a proposal coordinator and technical writer with Emerson Process Management in Knoxville. So, for more than 20 years, Pat Hope did indeed make a very nice living as a writer.

Even while writing a lot of dry technical documents, Pat kept her hand in the creative writing world as well, serving as chairman of the Tennessee Writers Alliance while concurrently editing that organization's first anthology in 1996. More recently, she received the Oak Ridge Arts Council Award in 2013 for her contribution to the literary arts as one of the founders of the Tennessee Mountain Writers. She won a first-place award in the novel category from the Knoxville Writers Guild in 2014 for her contemporary romance, "*A Place for Lovers*," which was published in 2015.

Over the past 15+ years, Pat's poetry, fiction and nonfiction writing has appeared in a wide range of publications including "The Writer," "Blue Ridge Country," "Mature Living," "The Notebook" and various anthologies. She also had three articles and an essay published in Southern Writers magazine in 2015.

Pat's side projects have included a photo book for her children that presents eight decades of family photos and a story about her and Chuck's life together. She wrote a blog she built around her third son Terry's participation in a foreign racing team and a trip she and Chuck made to Qatar in 2010.

In 2010, Pat edited the "Remember September Prompted Poetry" anthology. In 2017, Pat coordinated the publishing of another anthology through her affiliation with Grace Writers of Grace Lutheran Church in Oak Ridge. The anthology, "In God's Hand," features 50 area writers in poetry, fiction and nonfiction.

Almost last, and probably not least, she was one of 20 writers who took part in the Tennessee Women Project, which resulted in the award-winning book "Tennessee Women of Vision and Courage," which was published in 2012. The book highlights the achievements of 22 remarkable women. Pat wrote about Elizabeth Rona, a pioneer in nuclear chemistry and physics who worked at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Clearly, Pat Hope has created a place for herself in Oak Ridge literary and journalistic history as an award-winning poet, fiction and nonfiction writer, businesswoman and founder of an influential writers organization.

For more information on Pat, please visit: <http://thetwohopes.wixsite.com/author-pat-hope>

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Thank you Sue for an excellent article providing insight into one of our own and Carolyn for your editing.

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