

# Roger Cloutier – Scientist, Mentor, and Community Advocate

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of March 11, 2019)

One of the joys of my past 13 years of producing Historically Speaking columns in The Oak Ridger has been the many wonderful people I have met who contributed stories about Oak Ridge history. Certainly, among the most pleasurable encounters has been with Roger Cloutier!

When Roger called or sent an email asking me to drop by his home as he had something to discuss with me, I quickly arranged to go see him. My wife, Fanny, always laughed and said to me, "Roger thinks you work for him!" and he did not hesitate to give me assignments and check to see if I was progressing on them as he intended. Great fun! He was always polite, but in his own unique way, insistent.

Along with legions of others, Fanny recalls fondly the time she spent working for Roger at Oak Ridge Associated Universities as many others do as well. Fanny's immediate supervisor was Evelyn Watson and both of them admired Roger and his method of mentoring and managing people. She will tell you that Roger rarely would take credit for accomplishments but would always point the recognition to his team rather than himself.

Roger came to Oak Ridge in 1959 to work for ORAU as a scientist and manager where he remained for 33 years. There he managed health physics, medical physics and environmental science programs, all of which were highly successful and grew over the years.

His achievements as a scientist include being the first radiation safety officer for the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies. In the early years of radiopharmaceuticals, Roger, recognizing the need, created the Internal Dosimetry Center, which produced a series of well-attended, international symposia devoted to dosimetry. The proceedings of the Sixth Annual International Radiopharmaceutical Symposium in 1996 was dedicated to Roger and Evelyn Watson, his protégé. He had helped Evelyn attain a level of high regard within the scientific community and took great pride in her achievements.

Roger and his staff played major roles in responding to radiation accidents throughout the world through establishing the initial dosimetry for many U.S. accidents and for the accidents in Brazil and El Salvador.

Radiological safety training was another of Roger's passions. This interest led him to become involved in the Special Training Division of ORAU where he conducted training courses in South America with the Atoms for Peace Program. He also taught a 10-week Health Physics Training Course for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to train health physicists in the Agreement States regulatory programs.

In 1974 the decision was made to close the ORAU cancer research hospital. Roger recognized that with its closing that left Oak Ridge with no place to treat radiation accident victims. He wrote a proposal for the Radiation Emergency Assistance Center / Training Site (REAC/TS). This facility which began operations in July 1976, is located in the Oak Ridge Methodist Hospital. It has been serving not only Oak Ridge's needs but also the entire country with direct onsite help, consultation, and with special treatments for internal contamination. REAC/TS is also a World Health Organization resource available world-wide.

Roger has also been recognized for his environmental work by helping establish the ORAU Environmental Survey and Site Assessment Program, which today still serves Department of Energy and NRC with verification for radiological cleanup at sites nationwide. This effort also resulted in a major research program at ORAU to determine the extent of mercury contamination in Oak Ridge."

Roger contributed significantly to professional societies in his field. He served the Health Physics Society in many capacities including a term as its president. Roger's various service positions within the Society included implementing the creation of the Fellow Class of membership, the formation of the Power Reactor Section, emphasizing the need for routine financial disclosure and expanding committee activities.

Roger has been highly recognized and praised by the Health Physics Society and its East Tennessee Chapter. He was awarded the "Lifetime Achievement Award" of the East Tennessee Chapter. He

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received the Founders Award from the Health Physics Society in 2000 for his pioneering efforts in dosimetry research, his emphasis on improving health physics training, his role in radiation accident investigation, and his forty plus years of service to the Society.

In the Society Roger's penchant for mentorship was evident as eight of his protégés have served as president of the East Tennessee Chapter of the Health Physics Society, six have been national Health Physics Society officers, and three have won the prestigious Society's Elda Anderson award

In addition, Roger was a productive member of the Society of Nuclear Medicine. He chaired the SNM's Medical Internal Radiation Dose Committee from 1975 to 1979. While serving in this capacity he reorganized the committee into a more efficient, effective, and securely funded group. The SNM bestowed upon Roger the Loevinger-Berman Award, given in recognition of excellence pertaining to the field of internal dosimetry.

In addition to the Society awards, the DOE Secretary's Certificate of Appreciation was awarded to Roger for his excellence in providing training.

Jo Tipton, who worked for Roger had this to say about their relationship, "He always knew the answer to every question you had, or would tell you he didn't know, but would find out and get back with you. He was so full of questions about everything and always interested in almost everything you did...he'd share advice, and would sometimes remind you, although you didn't ask for his advice, he was going to give it anyway.

"I believe everyone who knew him, had an opportunity to work for him, be a colleague, him be your mentor, was/has been a better person just for knowing him and having him in your life..I had that for over 50 years, our relationships changed over those years, and I am certainly grateful he came in to my life...I already miss him very much!"

She also shared this insight, "Dr. Elizabeth Rona was on the Division staff working with John Noakes and Steve Kim. Dr. Rona had worked with Madame and Pierre Curie, so she always had stories to tell about her work with them and their laboratories. Eventually Dr. Rona was unable to 'safely' drive to the Division building on Laboratory Road, so she frequently caught a ride with another staff member. Sometimes it was Dr. Lawrence Akers, the Division Chairman. Eventually, after Dr. Akers was gone, Roger picked her up and took her home several times each week."

Additionally, Roger has led a very active personal life and filled his available time with community support activities. Civil Rights was of particular concern to Roger and he took an active role in supporting school integration as well as integration of many of the segregated public facilities in Oak Ridge. His leadership was evident in the success of many of these efforts. He served as chairman of the non-governmental community Relations Council.

He also managed a home health care agency, the Clinch River Home Health organization when its director was ill. He formed Youth Haven when he learned that sometimes underprivileged children were placed temporarily in jail when their home life was disrupted. He was closely affiliated with the local United Way organizing fund drives and frequently promoting the goals of United Way.

Roger and his wife, Linda, are longtime members of St Mary's Catholic Church where they took many personal initiatives to benefit people such as the White Elephant where donated items were sold to gain funds for the church's benevolent work.

Many people will attest to Roger's unique ability to see a need and to personally do something to meet it, often through his crafty leadership style to get others involved and to instill in them the same intensity of intent to fix the problem. Most all of his initiatives succeeded primarily because of his personal dedication and commitment which encouraged others to do the same.

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Roger was a practical problem solver as well as a scientist. This combination served him well and he became a person whom a vast majority of those who knew him thought very highly of him and admired his humble nature that most often shuffled off any recognition for his work to those who were following his lead and assisting him in the task. Roger was a truly unselfish and caring person who felt strongly the need to take action...and did!



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Roger teaching, one of his favorite things to do



An early photograph of Roger and Jack Beck, close friends for many years