

CHARLES EUGENE (GENE) HENRY II
MARCH 23, 1925 - MARCH 22, 1999
73 YEARS, 11 MONTHS, 27 DAYS

Charles Eugene Henry II was born in Bainbridge Township, Chagrin Falls, Ohio, on Monday, March 23, 1925, the third son of Charles Adams and Blanche Hawley Henry. The Henry family traced its heritage in Bainbridge Township back to 1817 and the acquisition of farmland that yet remains in the family. Gene Henry was named after his great-grandfather, Charles Eugene Henry, who was a Union Army veteran of the 42nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry, who was wounded twice in the Battle of Vicksburg, and who became an aide to General James Abram Garfield, later U.S. Congressman, Hiram College President, and then the 20th President of the United States. Steeped in such a proud heritage and tradition, the Henry family bequeathed to its generations both a tradition of public service and a love of genealogy. Gene Henry shared a zeal for both.

Gene was educated in the public schools of Bainbridge Township. He and his three brothers--Fredrick, born in 1919, John, born in 1923, and Donald, born in 1936--relished life out of doors, working on the family's 200 acre farm, hunting, fishing, boxing, and savoring many sports. Gene's father, Charles Adams Henry, left active farming after the loss of his dairy cattle herd to tuberculosis. Charles--himself a graduate of the Ohio State University and Hiram College, where he and Blanche Hawley had met as students--went back to Hiram College where he was employed for the rest of his working life as a football coach, alumni secretary, and student recruiter at high schools. Charles' employee status allowed his sons to attend Hiram College tuition-free. Gene entered Hiram in 1942. He worked various jobs to earn his own room and board so as not to burden his family financially.

By the end of his freshman year, June, 1943, Gene at age 18 felt a duty to enter U.S. military service as his older brothers Fred--a B17 bomber pilot in Italy, and John, in the Army Air Force in New Guinea--had done. A burst ear drum sustained in infancy prevented Gene from service in any of the U.S. military branches, including the U.S. Merchant Marine. Disappointed with his 4-F draft status, Gene enlisted his father's aid in researching options. They discovered the American Field Service, a civilian ambulance corps that resourced the British Eighth Army in North Africa and Sicily and later the U.S. Fifth Army in the Italian peninsula campaign against the entrenched Nazis and Italian Fascists. Gene drove ambulances evacuating the wounded during the battles of Monte Cassino, Anzio Beach, and the liberation of Rome on June 5, 1944. He contracted typhoid fever during his Italian campaign service. After D Day, June 6, 1944, Gene's American Field Service unit was redeployed to northern France via Marseilles. Eventually, he was sent to Belgium, Holland, and northern Germany where he and others in his ambulance unit assisted in April, 1945, in caring for the survivors of the infamous Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and in the transporting of the dead for burial in mass graves. (Bergen-Belsen was the notorious camp where diarist Anne Frank had died a month before the Allied liberation.) The horrors of the inhumanity of the situation made a lasting impression on Gene.

V-E Day, May 8, 1945, found Gene Henry continuing to aid in the Belsen camp clean-up. After doing all that could be done, Gene's outfit was sent to Antwerp and from there by ship back to New York. By July, 1945, Gene Henry was reunited with his parents and family in Bainbridge Township, a worldly-wise veteran traveler at the age of twenty.

Gene returned to his sophomore year at Hiram College in the fall of 1945, just ahead of the "crush" of returning veterans studying under the G.I. Bill. Gene worked on campus in food service and as a dish washer in Gray hall. He played football and basketball. Gene's love of adventure led him and his brother John to hitch-hike to Wyoming in the summer of 1947 and a summer job with the U.S. Forest Service at Jackson Hole. He and John together helped fight forest fires as well as camping out of doors. The Henry brothers hitch-hiked their way home to Ohio at summer's end and returned to Hiram for Gene's senior year, fall of 1947.

By February, 1948, Gene had accrued enough academic credits at Hiram to graduate. He left and found employment at Chase Brass Company in Euclid, OH, rooming there and riding a motorcycle as transportation. He sought to earn enough money to pay for law school. Gene worked at Chase Brass until a pre-Korean War recession led to his lay-off.

Over the next eighteen months, Gene hitch-hiked to Texas with a friend, unsuccessfully sought employment in the oil and gas fields, and eventually worked for a Houston-area firm which repossessed cars. Gene learned in early 1949, through his friend Dave Chambers and Paul Bird, of a job opportunity in Anchorage, Alaska. Gene hitch-hiked from Houston, TX, to Anchorage, AK, and found construction work with a gold mining outfit, an experience Gene found most interesting.

Law school beckoned, however. After a month in the Alaskan gold fields, Gene flew from Anchorage to Seattle with his friend Dave Chambers and alternately hitch-hiked and traveled by bus back to Cleveland. Gene had already applied for, and been admitted to, the Western Reserve University Law School. He began studies there in September, 1949, rooming in the basement of the Cleveland Heights home of his brother Fred and wife Janet Cope Henry. Gene worked his way through law school, completing his degree in 1952 and passing the Ohio State Bar Exam which admitted him to the practice of law.

While a law student, Gene Henry was one of the groomsmen in the wedding of his friend, Dave Chambers, held at Hiram, OH. At this wedding, Gene met Jeanne Dorothy Fisher of Westchester County, NY, a student at Hiram College. Jeanne was herself an attendant in the wedding party. The couple dated, courted, and were married at Hastings-on-Hudson, NY, on August 30, 1952, after Jeanne had completed her degree at Hiram College.

Gene and Jeanne first resided at the Thrasher Apartments in Burton, OH. Jeanne taught first grade at East Claridon in the Burton School System, while Gene worked at the Johnson Rubber company at night to earn enough money to open his own law practice. Gene also worked at a title company in Chardon, OH, the county seat of Geauga County. He learned how to find records and to conduct title searches and related work. Gene "sat in" on public trials in progress to observe courtroom procedure and watch attorneys ply their skills. Gene secured transcripts of previous trials and read them at home to hone his approach and methodology of trying cases.

Gene Henry opened his first law office in Chagrin Falls, OH, in the mid-1950's sharing space with the Harold Stevenson Insurance Agency located over the Speice's Drug Store building. Gene and Jeanne Henry moved from Burton to Chagrin Falls and purchased a house on Solon Road. Jeanne taught in the Chagrin Falls school system as Gene developed his law practice.

3

The Henry's also worked to develop their family. They gave birth to their first child, Dorothy Christine, on February 24, 1955. A son, James Fisher, followed on September 6, 1956. Another son, Charles Eugene III, came on April 26, 1958. Patrick Owen was born on June 7, 1960; Daniel Hawley on January 30, 1962; and daughter Paula Louise on December 6, 1966.

While in Chagrin Falls, Gene ran successfully in 1955 for election to the Chagrin Falls Village Council and served for a year in 1956. Gene was appointed Ohio Assistant Attorney General under Attorney General William Saxbe in the mid 1950's. He was assigned to the eminent domain division of the Ohio Attorney General's office and specialized in acquisition of right of way properties attendant to the construction of Interstate Route 70. Gene gained considerable experience and expertise as a trial lawyer in the course of his service with the Attorney General's office. He commuted weekly from his home to his work in Columbus and throughout the state.

Gene returned to private practice in 1958. Because of Gene's increasing interest in politics and political public service, he and his family moved from Chagrin Falls to a home in Geauga County, OH: 8462 Rockspring Drive, Lake Lucerne, Bainbridge Township. The growing Henry family resided there until 1964 when they built their new house at 8266 Westhill Drive in Lake Lucerne, their home for the rest of Gene's life.

In 1959, Gene established a private law practice in Chardon, OH, with Edwin Hoffstetter, an attorney and Geauga County Commissioner. In 1960, Edwin Hoffstetter ran successfully for the post of Geauga County Prosecutor, then a part time position whose office was housed in the law offices and firm of the incumbent. Gene Henry was named Assistant Geauga County Prosecutor. Gene continued both in private law practice and in service with the prosecutor's office throughout the 1960's. Gene gained considerable competence and a reputation for excellence as a litigator. When, in 1966, Edwin Hoffstetter was elected to a seat in the Ohio House of Representatives, Gene Henry was appointed by the Geauga County Republican Party to fulfill the unexpired term as County Prosecutor. In 1968, Gene ran for and was elected to the post in his own right, serving until 1973, at which time he returned to private law practice. In 1976, Gene Henry ran unsuccessfully for Judge of the Geauga County Common Pleas Court. His defeat at the polls that year was presumably part of the post-Watergate scandal national sentiment that swept many Republicans from local and national offices. His defeat was a great disappointment to Gene. Thereafter, he practiced law from his office and from his home until his "retirement" in the mid-1990's.

Gene Henry was a community and civic minded person whose involvements led him to hold membership in the Bainbridge-Solon VFW, Bainbridge Civic Club and the Babes of 1916 Softball League. He volunteered in home delivery for Meals on Wheels. He enjoyed competitive tennis in Lake Lucerne and the Western Reserve Racquet Club as well as fishing, hunting, horseshoes, Lake Lucerne Fourth of July softball games, and motorcycling. Gene took great pride in the academic and athletic achievements of his children and their families. He was an avid reader, savored history and politics, and loved the adventure of the out of doors.

Gene Henry was a family man. He had a strong sense of tradition. Nothing was more important to Gene than having a close relationship to his parents, brothers, and all of those who followed. And there were many! They were his greatest joy. Family gatherings of the entire Henry clan were common and a high priority to Gene. Whether it was a camping trip or a holiday get-together, Gene's children grew up loving their cousins. That love continues to this day.

In January, 1996, Gene Henry was diagnosed with metastasized colon cancer. After surgery and a regimen of chemo and radiation therapy, he remained active and in vital spirits. He continued to golf and to play tennis. His zest and zeal for life never diminished. In October, 1998, however, Gene's health declined as the cancer was found to have spread. He remained in his own home, surrounded and attended by the love of his wife Jeanne and their children and extended family. On February 11, 1999, Gene entered a program of home hospice care provided by the Hospice of the Western Reserve. His condition gradually weakened. On Monday, March 22, 1999, about 10 P.M., just hours before his 74th birthday, Charles Eugene Henry II died quietly and with dignity in his sleep in his hospice bed in his family living room.

He is survived by his wife, Jeanne; children Dorothy (husband Peter) Lee; James (wife Grace) Henry; Charles (wife Linda) Henry; Patrick (wife Lori) Henry; Daniel (wife Cindy) Henry; and Paula (Polly) Henry; by his grandchildren Brian Lee, Keith Lee, and Jeanne Lee; Erin, Adam, David, Todd, Kim, Peter, Anna, and Ross Henry. He is also survived by his brothers John and Donald Henry and their families; by many nieces and nephews; and by many friends and neighbors. Gene was predeceased by his parents; by his brother and sister-in-law Fredrick and Janet Cope Henry; and by his grandson Kurt Lee.

We commit and commend the life and spirit of Charles Eugene Henry II into the hands of Almighty God, his Creator and ours. May God receive Gene's adventurous soul into eternity with our thanks and gratitude for his life so richly led and shared on this earth.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labors, for their deed follow them.'" --Revelation 14:13

Rev. Donald Grauer

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