

# Ray Cross

Ray was born on October 29, 1912 in Pontiac, MI to Harry and Mary (Skidmore) Cross. He graduated from Pontiac High School in 1930, during the hard economic times of the Great Depression. Financially unable to immediately enter college, he demonstrated his passion for continued learning by taking a year of post-graduate courses at Pontiac High. His initiative was rewarded by a scholarship which enabled him to enroll at the Michigan College of Mining and Technology, now Michigan Technological University. The scholarship that altered the course of Ray's life was mere \$12 per term (to cover lab fees), since at that time tuition was zero! In four years of persistence and hard work, Ray earned a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering and a Master of Science in Chemistry, graduating with both in 1935, thereby becoming the first Tech student to earn both a BS and a MS degree in four years. His outstanding scholarship was recognized by election to Tau Beta Pi, the honorary engineering fraternity, whose key he proudly wore throughout his life. For the first dozen years after graduation, he worked as a metallurgist in various foundries, primarily with magnesium. During WWII, he served his country by directing the volume production of magnesium castings larger than any made before (bomber airplane wheels), a task well suited to his inventive and dedicated nature. In 1941 he married Eleanor Kennedy, a union which led to four children and a successful business venture, as they partnered to operate the Ann Arbor dealership of Culligan Water Conditioning for over forty years.

As his inquisitive and willful nature merged with the analytical ability he developed through his studies, Ray became a remarkable visionary. For example, he became the first Culligan franchisee in the world to install a regeneration facility for portable exchange demineralizer tanks in his plant. Also, when enlarging and renovating his home in 1954, he designed a heat pump system to heat and cool it. He took this pioneering design to Detroit Edison, asking only for the "off-peak" rate for the electricity to operate it and offering Edison the opportunity to install any monitoring equipment they cared to. Unfortunately, Ray was too far ahead of his time. Edison rejected his proposal. A few decades later, Edison began to actively promote such heat pumps.

Ray gave back to and was recognized by his alma mater, his chosen profession, and his local community in a variety of ways.

Alma Mater: Ray remained in close contact with Michigan Tech his entire life, returning for Alumni Class Reunions 40, 50, 55, 60, 65, and 70 years after his graduation. For decades, he attended hockey games to root for Tech whenever they came to Ann Arbor to play Michigan. More recently, he attended basketball games between Tech and Michigan, and especially enjoyed watching the “Bash at the Big House” football game between Tech and Grand Valley from the President’s Box in Michigan Stadium. To provide financial assistance to future Tech students, Ray endowed a scholarship fund, a loan fund, and a post-graduate fellowship in chemistry. For his professional accomplishments, he was recognized by induction into the Outstanding Chemistry Alumni Academy (1996). For his generous financial support, he was honored by membership in Tech’s President’s Club and Hubbell Society.

Chosen Profession: Ray served for over fifty years on boards and committees of the international trade association of the water quality improvement industry, currently known as Water Quality Association (WQA), including a term as President in 1960. Indicative of his steadfast dedication, he attended sixty consecutive annual international conventions. At his 60<sup>th</sup> convention in March, Ray unveiled a challenge grant to augment the endowment fund of the Water Quality Research Foundation (an affiliate of WQA), in order to increase the funding available for research into water quality issues for the ultimate benefit of all mankind. In recognition of his lifetime of service, WQA honored him with Lifetime Membership (1985), the Award of Merit (1982 and again, together with Eleanor, 1996) and the Hall of Fame Award (1998). Most recently, WQA bestowed upon Ray the ultimate in recognition by naming an annual award for him. Appropriately, Ray was given the very first Ray E. Cross Award in 2003.

Local Community: Ray created and funded the Ray and Eleanor Cross Foundation to provide financial support for the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra, the Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor, and St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church. In seven years, his Foundation has provided over \$200,000 to these three local organizations to sponsor AASO concerts, provide scholarships and camperships for local youth through Kiwanis, and support St. Andrew’s in its community service. Ray also served Ann Arbor through his membership in the Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor, where he was recently honored for achieving forty years of perfect attendance. During these years, he faithfully participated in his club’s visiting youth at Maxey Boys Training

School, bell-ringing for Salvation Army, delivering Motor Meals, and recycling large amounts of used-but-useable items at the popular weekly “Kiwaniis Rummage Sale.” In addition, challenge grants to Kiwanis by his Foundation in the past three years have resulted in 65 academic scholarships and 52 summer camperships for needy area youth. For his exemplary service, Kiwanis has honored him with a “Ray Cross Day,” a Hixon Fellowship Award and a Distinguished Kiwanian Award.

A dedicated family man with a bent for exploration and adventure, Ray took his young family on annual camping trips, focusing on the National Parks and Monuments of the United States. These trips, which came to include Mexico, Canada and even Europe, instilled in his children a love of travel, for which they are most grateful. Ray later enjoyed journeys with Eleanor to many parts of the world.

Ray died peacefully at home on August 25, 2006, which would have been his dear wife Eleanor’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Ray was preceded in death by Eleanor and eldest son Jeffrey. His memory will be treasured by his son Harry (Carmen) and grandson A. Bradley (Fernanda); his daughter Joan of La Conner, WA and granddaughters Caitlin Shrigley of Portland, OR and Hannah Shrigley of La Conner; son Bradley (Nancy Brennan); and his sister-in-law Kay Bagley of Oceanside, CA. He will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by his many acquaintances throughout Ann Arbor and beyond, especially his fellow local Kiwanians and his friends from Michigan Tech and WQA. The family wishes to thank Sharon McCartney for her years of assistance as Ray’s caregiver. Thanks also to Colleen Sibilla and Arbor Hospice for their caring efforts in Ray’s final weeks.

Private burial will take place near his beloved lakeside cabin. Deacon Svea Gray will lead a memorial service at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, 506 N Division on Friday, September 22 at 3 pm, followed by fellowship at the church.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Ray & Eleanor Cross Foundation, Box 1303, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.