



Carl Miller Relyea

December 29, 1912 - December 28, 2012

On December 28, 2012, Carl Miller Relyea passed away two hours before his 100th birthday. Carl led a full life following his passionate interest in music, meteorology, hydrology and travel. The son of Charles Miller Crosswell Relyea and Edna Pulver Relyea was born on the family farm in Claverack, NY, on December 29, 1912. His mother attended Claverack College, and his father attended the Hudson River Institute in Claverack. Carl started his education in a one-room schoolhouse where the two Misses Sagendorf taught. In winter their students, of all ages, gathered around the pot-bellied stove to do their lessons and warm their lunches.

Carl Relyea's love of music started in early childhood with piano lessons from his Aunt Jennie Relyea, an accomplished pianist, and Harold Rivenburg. When he was 11, he learned to play the pipe organ at Claverack's Dutch Reformed Church, where his parents attended and his father was a member of the Consistory. At age 16 he was simultaneously named as organist for two churches: morning services at Hudson's First Presbyterian Church and evensong at Trinity Episcopal Church in Claverack. Carl was the glee club pianist at Hudson High School and later for his college glee club. He graduated from the Institute of Musical Arts (now known as Juilliard) and Columbia University in New York City, from which he received his Master of Arts in Music in 1938. He was then named as organist and choir director for Morrow Memorial Church in Maplewood, New Jersey.

Music was Carl's life until World War II. On the advice of family friend Colonel Mesick, instead of waiting to be drafted, Carl enlisted in the Army. The Army, in its wisdom, sent him to MIT to study meteorology. He served as Theater Weather Officer for the secret Canadian Theater air bases that supplied warplanes for Europe. Later Captain Relyea served in the Pacific/Asian Theater in Nome, Alaska where he briefed Russian pilots who flew USA made planes across Siberia to the Russian Front. On his military assignments, Carl always managed to find a church organ or piano on which to practice or entertain the troops.

Upon demobilization Carl Relyea married Harriet Watson of Maplewood, New Jersey. They then lived in Bermuda, where Carl was the civilian weather forecaster for both the US Air Force and Pan American Airlines. He also substituted as organist at St. John's Anglican Church. Upon return with his growing family to the US in 1949, Carl joined the first weather forecast staff at Idlewild Airport (later JFK International Airport). In 1950, he accepted a position as a Hydrologist in the Cincinnati, OH office of the US Weather Bureau (now NOAA).

Since the Ohio River's floodwaters do not observe the Sabbath nor crest upon command, Carl could not accept any permanent position as organist in Cincinnati. For twelve years he substituted when he could for organists at area churches. However in 1962, Highland Methodist Church was determined to name Carl as organist and made a generous offer: they would hire a substitute whenever (not if) Ohio River floodwaters required Carl to miss playing Sunday services. He accepted, and his music ministry touched many lives for 37 years...and yes, the river did assert its demand for his 24-hour attention at the Ohio River Forecast Center during floods.

Later when the Northeast River Forecast Center was established, Carl Relyea

was invited by NOAA to Albany, NY to assist with forecasting procedure development for New England rivers, the Hudson River and its tributaries. In 1965, NOAA named Carl as Hydrologist-in-Charge of the Ohio River Forecast Center from which he retired in 1977. However, he grew restless with retirement and accepted a position as Deputy Director of the Ohio Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency. He truly retired in 2000 and traveled to Europe with a primary focus on visiting and playing noteworthy organs. In Carl's last years, he wrote his autobiography and with great fervor researched family genealogy and Hudson River history.

Carl was a member Phi Kappa Psi, the New York Academy of Sciences, the Columbia University Club of New York City, Cincinnati Kiwanis Club, and Retired Engineers and Scientists of Cincinnati.

Carl Relyea's wife Harriet predeceased him in 1982. He is survived by his son Richard and daughter-in-law Pam, daughters Deborah and Cornelia, granddaughters Kesi and Kristin, sister Gretchen (Relyea) Hannan and her sons Robert, Alan and William Hannan. Carl's memorial service was held last January at Christ Church Cathedral in Cincinnati, OH. His Spring burial will be on Saturday April 27 at 11:00 a.m. at the Dutch Reformed Church Cemetery, 88 New York 9H, Claverack, NY, 12513. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made in his memory to the Dutch Reformed Church, at above address, or to the Edna Pulver Relyea Scholarship Fund at Barnard College, Office of Development, 3009 Broadway, New York, NY 10027.

Tribute Wall

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Cornelia Relyea - April 05, 2013 at 09:28 PM