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# Obituaries and Memorials

W. Donald Cooke  
and  
June Marie Cooke

*reprinted from  
The Cornell Chronicle  
and  
the Ithaca Journal*



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# W. Donald Cooke

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*from The Cornell Chronicle*

<http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Sept07/cooke.obit.html>

Sept. 26, 2007

## **W. Donald Cooke, analytical chemist, administrator and poker player, dies at 89**

By Lauren Gold

William Donald Cooke, Cornell professor emeritus of chemical and chemical biology and a longtime university administrator, died Sept. 20 at his home in Ithaca. He was 89.

Cooke came to Cornell in 1951 as an assistant professor and led the effort to modernize analytical chemistry, introducing instrumental analysis, including electrochemistry, infrared and nuclear magnetic resonance. He became a full professor in 1959 and later became associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (1962-64); dean of the Graduate School (1964-73); and vice president for research and advanced studies (1969-83).



Among many other contributions, he wrote the University Appointment Manual, now known as “the Cooke Book.” He also served as acting provost, acting chemistry department chair, occupational health and safety programs director and an active member of the Cornell University Senate. During the student unrest of the 1960s and ‘70s, he negotiated successfully with student leaders and even remained in contact with several of them in later years.

Born in Philadelphia in 1918, Cooke graduated from St. Joseph’s College in 1940. During World War II he joined the U.S. Army Air Force and was sent to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to train as a meteorologist. He served at Gen. Dwight Eisenhower’s headquarters and helped with tactical weather forecasts including the Normandy D-Day invasion, and in his three years of service he saw postings in Wiesbaden, London, Paris, Casablanca and Cairo.

He was discharged with the rank of major in 1945 and was such a highly skilled poker player that on his voyage home he made enough money to buy

a diamond ring and marry his childhood sweetheart, June Marie Orr. He continued to play poker several times a month throughout his career, and he founded the Cayuga Poker Society, for which he published a monthly newsletter with unusual stories about history, sports, politics and other items of interest.

He earned his M.S. degree in 1948 and his Ph.D. in 1949, both at the University of Pennsylvania. He then studied at Princeton University with Professor N.H. Furman for one year as a National Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow and another year as a Eugene Higgins Fellow.

At Cornell Cooke was known for the broad scope of his career and for his generosity, sincerity and passion for justice. He continued an active teaching role throughout his administration postings, and even past his retirement in 1987.

“Don had a special gift with people,” said Charles Wilcox, professor emeritus of chemistry and chemical biology. “He had a positive outlook and led a life of modesty and dignity with respect for people from all walks of life. All who knew Don will miss him.”

June Cooke passed away in October 2006, shortly after the couple’s 60th wedding anniversary. Cooke is survived by his brother, six children and nine grandchildren.

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***See also:*** [www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Sept07/sep-07enews.html](http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Sept07/sep-07enews.html) - 15k - 2007-10-24

## **Donald Cooke, analytical chemist and administrator, dies**

William Donald Cooke, Cornell professor emeritus of chemical and chemical biology and a longtime university administrator, died Sept. 20 at his home in Ithaca. He was 89. (Sept. 26, 2007) W. Donald "Don" Cooke

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*Published in the Ithaca Journal on 9/22/2007.*

**W. DONALD "DON" COOKE**

ITHACA - W. Donald "Don" Cooke, 89, passed away peacefully at home on Thursday, September 20, 2007. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated by Rev. Michael Mahler on Tuesday, September 25, 2007, at 11 a.m. at the St. Catherine of Siena Church. Friends may call from 5-8 p.m. on Monday, September 24, 2007, at the Bangs Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, a charity will be announced in a complete obituary to appear in the Monday edition of The Journal.

*<http://www.legacy.com/theithacajournal/Obituaries.asp?Page=LifeStory&PersonID=94854290>*

*Published in the Ithaca Journal on 9/24/07*

## William Donald Cooke



ITHACA - William Donald Cooke, 89, passed away peacefully at home last Thursday morning, September 20th. He had been in failing health since the death of his wife, June Marie Cooke, shortly after their 60th wedding anniversary in October of last year. He loved her dearly and missed her daily.

With daughter, Ann, he nursed June through her final years. Ann, in turn, nursed him through his final months, allowing him to pass away at home.

Don Cooke was born at home in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 15, 1918 during the height of the Great Influenza Epidemic. Excited by the sparks from the hooves of horses pulling coal fired steam engines through cobblestone streets, young

Don first aspired to be a fireman. His family was of modest means but he scored well in his exams and was able to attend St. Joseph's Prep School. A Jesuit Priest urged his family to enroll their son in St. Joseph's College and was able to attend at no charge. He graduated with a degree in 1940 and stayed on to work off his tuition as a chemistry assistant.

During WWII, he joined the Army Air Force and was sent to MIT to be trained as a meteorologist. He served on General Eisenhower's headquarter staff (SHAEF) and provided weather forecasts for many allied missions including the D-Day invasion. For a Philly boy whose trips to New Jersey shore were an adventure, his wartime postings in London, Paris, Casablanca and Cairo were simply exotic. He was discharged as a Major in 1945. He returned from Europe on the Queen Mary with 8,000 servicemen and with winnings from transatlantic poker games, disembarked and hailed a taxi for a 50 mile journey to visit his girlfriend, June.

June and Don met through cousins in 1934 when they were teenagers. Friendship led to romance and they were married in St. Patrick's Cathedral Chapel in 1946. Her diamond was purchased from winnings from that return voyage. After receiving degrees at the University of Pennsylvania and completing post doctorate work at Princeton, Don brought his young family to Ithaca in 1951, joining the Cornell chemistry faculty and later becoming a full professor in 1959. In the following decades, he assumed administration roles, serving as Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (1962-1964), Dean of the Graduate School (1964-1973) and Vice President for Research from 1969-1983. Through it all he continued to teach his 8:00 chemistry class. He contributed a great deal to the university and was author of the University Appointment Manuel, also known as "the Cooke Book", which is still used at Cornell. Some

of his most satisfying moments were negotiating with students during the student uprisings of the 60's and 70's. He reveled in the negotiations, had great respect for the student leaders and remained in contact with several of them in later years.

Don had an active retirement traveling with June by train to the western United States and to Europe several times on the QE2. He founded the Cayuga Poker Society before poker was fashionable, which connected him to the younger generation. Beginning in 1992 he published a poker newsletter. This monthly newsletter listed the games for the month and also included fascinating and well researched sidebar stories on everything from sports to science, politics to probability. June was his spellchecker. His readership grew beyond poker players to include a broad audience. He had great affection for his poker friends who, after June's passing, rallied around him and insured that Don could continue to partake in the games even as his health failed.

Aside from travel and games, he was also passionate about injustice. In recent years he had become more opposed to the country's leadership and took to the streets with his dog, Colleen, in tow to hoist signs as a veteran opposing the war in Iraq. A man of few regrets, one would be his failure to outlive the current administration.

Don enjoyed his pre-dinner martinis, his many books, winning at poker and cheering the underdog. A central theme of his life was his modesty, dignity and respect for people from all walks of life. He saw the common goodness in everyone and was the same engaging person whether dealing with Nobel Prize winners, university presidents, students, custodians, barmaids, waiters and gamblers. He will be missed by the many people he touched.

Most of all, he loved June and his family, whom were the center of his life. He considered himself lucky in love and in life.

Don was preceded in death by sisters, Mary, Julia and Gertrude and is survived by a brother, Edward of Philadelphia; daughters, Catherine and Ann of Ithaca; and sons, W. Donald Cooke, Jr. of Durango, Colorado, and his companion, Abbie Tarr, Peter and his wife, Kay of Trumansburg, NY, Christopher (Buff) and wife, Linda of Landsdale, PA, and Timothy and wife, Donna of Boston, MA; and nine grandchildren, Thea, Chloe, Tae, Maia, Ian, Sam, Camille, Simone and Alex Cooke; and a niece, Julia J. Ford of Clifton Heights, PA.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 25th at St. Catherine's of Sienna Church with Rev. Mike Mahler officiating. Friends may call on Monday, September 24th from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Bangs Funeral Home. Private family gravesite services will follow the Mass. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Hospicare of Ithaca, Immaculate Conception School or to your favorite charity.

<http://www.legacy.com/theithacajournal/Obituaries.asp?Page=LifeStory&PersonID=94980564>

## *Cooke, June Marie*



### **JUNE MARIE COOKE**

ITHACA - Shortly after her sixtieth wedding anniversary, June Marie Cooke, 86, passed away peacefully at home after a long illness, surrounded by her family. June was the loving wife of W. Donald Cooke; and a wonderful mother to her six children; and a grandmother to nine. June, who lived in New York City, met Don when she was fourteen years old while visiting cousins in Philadelphia. Despite the distance, a romance waxed and waned for twelve years, held together the old fashioned way, the U.S. Postal Service- the letters still exist. June was born in New York City on February 20, 1920, the first child of William K. Orr and Kathryn L. (Crossan) Orr. She grew up in a different Manhattan, riding to work in the summer in open-topped buses. During WWII she worked at Sword Steamship Lines, whose cargo ships plied the perilous North Atlantic convoy routes to Murmansk, Siberia. It fell to June to record the stories of the seamen who survived the many sinkings of the fleet. Later, she worked at the top-secret Norden Company, the maker of the bomb sight for the Air Force. June, always athletically inclined, played for the company's women's softball team, which was coached by the great Yankee pitcher, Lefty Gomez. As the war ran down, June decided to fulfill a long time ambition and entered nursing school. The effort was short lived when Don came home from the army after three years overseas. They were married on October 5, 1946, at St. Patrick's Cathedral in a modest ceremony- June made her own wedding suit. After first living in Philadelphia, then Princeton, the young family arrived in Ithaca in 1951 when Don was appointed as an assistant professor of chemistry at Cornell. June spent her energy and heart in caring for the family. She was always there for the children. If someone praised one of the kids, her retort



was, "All my children are great." She was always a mother, even to the very end. Her eldest son, Don, a physician, on a recent visit was tendering his goodbyes to his semiconscious mother. She managed to get out these last words to him, "Do you have enough money?" She was a talented musician with an unerring ear for vocal harmony. Music was always an important part of her life, from the orchestra at George Washington High School, to the choir at St. Catherine of Siena Church. She was preceded in death by a brother, William K. Orr Jr., with whom she was very close. She is survived by her husband, W. Donald Cooke; daughters, Catherine and Ann of Ithaca; and sons, W. Donald Cooke Jr. of Durango, Colorado, and his companion, Abbie Tarr, Peter and wife, Kay of Trumansburg, NY, Christopher and wife, Linda of Lansdale, PA, and Timothy and wife, Donna of Boston, MA; and nine grandchildren, Thea and Chloe, Tae and Maia, Ian and Sam, Camille, Simone and Alex Cooke; a niece, Julia J. Ford of Clifton Heights, PA; and a number of cousins. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Friday, October 27, 2006, at 11:00 a.m. at St. Catherine's of Siena Church with Rev. Michael Mahler officiating. Friends may call Thursday, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Bangs Funeral Home. Private family graveside services will follow the Mass. In lieu of flowers, if you wish, contribute to your favorite charity, Hospicare, or the Immaculate Conception School.

*Published in the Ithaca Journal on 10/26/2006.*

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*from the Cornell Chronicle*

<http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Nov07/Cooke.memorial.html>

Nov. 9, 2007

## Memorial for W. Donald Cooke is Nov. 10

By Lauren Gold

Family, colleagues and friends will gather Saturday, Nov. 10, to remember William Donald Cooke, Cornell professor emeritus of chemical and chemical biology and a longtime university administrator, who died Sept. 20 at age 89. The memorial will be held at noon in 200 Baker Laboratory at Cornell, and a reception will follow the program in the lobby.

Cooke came to Cornell in 1951 as an assistant professor and led the effort to modernize analytical chemistry, introducing instrumental analysis, including electrochemistry, infrared and nuclear magnetic resonance. He became a full professor in 1959 and later became associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (1962-64); dean of the Graduate School (1964-73); and vice president for research and advanced studies (1969-83).

Cooke was known for the broad scope of his career and for his generosity, sincerity and passion for justice. He continued an active teaching role throughout his administration postings and even past his retirement in 1987.

