

Charles William Welby (1926-2020)

Charles William Welby, 93, of Lexington, NC, formerly of Raleigh, died on September 22nd, 2020, after a gradual decline in health in recent years. He was born on October, 9, 1926, in Bakersfield, CA, to Harry and Mary Barnes Welby; and was preceded in death by his wife, Eleanor, his parents, and his brother, Robert.

He is survived by two daughters, Mary Louise Welby (Robert “Hersh” McNeil) of John Day, Oregon, and Nancy Welby Check (Jeffrey) of Lexington; five grandchildren: The Reverend Sydne Allen (Travis); Joseph Check (fiancée, Andreana Cunha); Charles McNeil; Meredith Check; and Sarah McNeil; three great-grandsons: Barrett, Henry, and Eli Allen; and a host of nieces and nephews.

Charles graduated from Taft High School (CA) in 1944 and the University of California, Berkeley (1948 and 1949), before earning his Ph.D. in 1952 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Dr. Welby’s lifelong enthusiasm for and study of geology was inspired by his experiences growing up in the oil fields of Taft. He was an Eagle Scout; served in the Navy ROTC; and was a manager for the Treble Clef music group, where he met Eleanor.

Charles was active in community service as a member of the Raleigh Kiwanis Club, and he served on the Wake County Planning Board, the NC Radiation Protection Commission, and Raleigh’s Citizen Advisory Council. A lifelong Presbyterian, he was a member of Hudson Memorial Presbyterian Church for over 50 years. He was a regular at the NC State University Club and a member of NCSU Retired Faculty until he moved to Lexington. He was a professor at several institutions before joining the geology faculty at NC State in 1965. Before retiring as Professor Emeritus in 1997, he especially enjoyed teaching courses in environmental geology, paleontology, and hydrogeology. As a licensed Geologist in three states, he was energized by research and loved participating in professional geological organizations, often presenting papers at international conferences. A philanthropist at heart, he raised funds for scholarships and research awards, and also established a scholarship for geology students at NCSU. He was a benefactor to several museums and libraries and was a longtime member of numerous professional organizations, including the Association of Environmental & Engineering Geologists (AEG); the Geological Society of America (GSA) and the American Water Resources Association (AWRA).

Together with Eleanor, Charles loved gardening, playing the piano and traveling around the world, spending time on six of the seven continents; and he always had a story to share about their many trips. Because experiencing different places was so important to them, they often invited their grandchildren to travel with them — even a quick trip to the park would turn into a grand adventure.

A celebration of Charles’ life will be held in the spring. Memorials may be made to the Charles & Eleanor Welby Geology Scholarship Endowment at the N.C. State College of Sciences Foundation, P.O. Box 8118, NC State University, Raleigh, NC 27695; the Raleigh Kiwanis Foundation, Inc.; P.O. Box 12, Raleigh, NC 27602-0012; or to the Eleanor Welby Piano Maintenance Fund at Hudson Memorial Presbyterian Church, 4921 Six Forks Rd., Raleigh, NC 27609.