



Harlan E Anderson

October 15, 1929 - January 30, 2019

Harlan E. Anderson, Computer Pioneer, Community Leader and Philanthropist

Harlan E. Anderson of New Canaan, CT died on January 30th, 2019 at age 89. Anderson was an early computer pioneer and innovator who co-founded the first mini computer company, Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC). At its peak, DEC was the second largest computer company in the world, with only IBM larger. Anderson often remembered his time writing computer programs for machines that had not yet been constructed.

Anderson was born in Freeport, Illinois on October 15, 1929. He showed his leadership abilities early, leading a popular dance band and involving himself in debating society. He also began dating the woman with whom he would spend his life, Lois Kahl. Anderson attended the University of Illinois, where he received a B.S. and M.S. in Physics. He was always proud of the fact that he worked his way through college with no family financial help, graduating in four years with honors and no debt. At Illinois, the computer programming classes he took were being taught by professors who were building one of the first electronic computers in the world. That experience changed his life.

He married his high school sweetheart, Lois Jean Kahl, while they were in college. After graduation they both joined M.I.T.'s Lincoln Laboratory where the Cold War air defense system for the country was being developed. For the first time, multiple computers and radars generated real time displays of enemy aircraft for use by military commanders. After five years, Anderson left M.I.T. to co-found DEC, which pioneered transistorized mini computers for man machine interaction. The company's first computer (The PDP-1) has been celebrated at the Computer History Museum as "The Mouse That Roared", because of the way it changed the world of computing forever. DEC's early success also showed the potential and power of venture capital. The company was one of the very first venture capital efforts that generated a significant return for the original investors, valued at over 500 times the initial investment in just over a decade.

After his early years at DEC, Anderson served in the late 1960's as Director of Technology for Time, Inc when the threat posed by electronic media to the printed word was first being recognized He went on to have a career in small scale venture capital primarily for technology start-ups, serving on many industry and corporate boards. He also built some of the first office buildings in New Canaan providing space for small businesses and

organizations.

Anderson was a strong believer in education and his philanthropy and volunteerism reflected this. His life was forever changed as a result of his own education and he was dedicated to providing that opportunity to others. In his memoir, "Learn, Earn and Return" Anderson wrote about his experiences learning about computers, earning from his computer and investment career and returning his time, knowledge and assets to the community.

He served as a Life Trustee at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (R.P.I.) where he led the audit and presidential search committees and as a trustee of the Norwalk Community College Foundation. He was a member of the Visiting Committee of the University of Illinois College of Engineering, where he was inducted into their Engineering Hall of Fame in 2010. He and his wife Lois sponsored the Distance Learning Center at Illinois, endowed scholarships at R.P.I., Norwalk Community College and Northwestern University. Anderson was also a trustee of King School in Stamford.

A life-long lover of music, Anderson was a Life Trustee of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He was active in encouraging the use of large video screens for the lawn audiences at Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and endowed a viola chair.

With his wife Lois, Anderson was very active as a community leader in New Canaan where they lived since 1966. He was a co-founder of the New Canaan chapter of the high school ABC program, co-founder of the New Canaan Inn (housing for the elderly) leading the organization through facility construction. He served as a trustee of the New Canaan Library, Norwalk Hospital and as a Deacon and Trustee of the Congregational Church of New Canaan.

He was a long-time member of Woodway Country Club in Darien, where he served on the Board of Governors as president and where he oversaw several construction projects. Always an inquisitive person and learner, Anderson enjoyed travel with his family around the world. He and Lois took each of their grandchildren on a European trip when they turned 10 and they celebrated important milestones with trips to experience other cultures and learn from the world. They travelled several times to Bletchley Park in England to pursue one of Anderson's hobbies, which was the study of how the British broke the secret German Enigma military code during World War II. He built a model of one of the German Enigma machines.

He is pre-deceased by his wife Lois and survived by his sons Brian of Monument, Colorado and Gregory (Carol) of Eagle, Colorado and a daughter Susan (Jo) of Longmont, Colorado, as well as three grandchildren, Scott (Sue), Christine (Vincent) and Matthew.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to: The New Canaan Library, the New Canaan Land Trust, the Boston Symphony Orchestra or the charity of your choice.