

Paul A. Wilks Jr., an expert in infrared spectroscopy who served on various town committees, died Saturday, Oct. 11, at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Center in Lebanon, N.H., after a brief illness. Mr. Wilks, 85, was the husband of the late Laura Parsons Wilks.

Mr. Wilks was born June 16, 1923, in Springfield, Mass., the son of the late Paul A. Wilks and Ethyl Libby Wilks.

He graduated Harvard University in 1944, with a bachelor's degree in engineering and joined the Perkin-Elmer Corporation in Norwalk that same year. He helped create Perkin-Elmer's analytical instrument division and the development and introduction of its first infrared spectrophotometer.

After several years, he left Perkin-Elmer to start his own infrared sampling handling equipment company, Connecticut Instrument Company, which he later sold to Barnes Engineering. Since that first company, he founded four additional companies — all specializing in instruments and accessories based on infrared spectroscopy. Until his death, Mr. Wilks played an active role in managing his latest two companies: Wilks Enterprise Inc., founded in 1995 and located in South Norwalk, which specialized in analyzers for applications such as determining oil/grease in water and biofuels measurements; and his latest business venture, Wilks QC Inc., founded in 2006, and located in Bradenton, Fla., which has developed an instrument for the soft drink industry to measure brix and carbon dioxide.

Over a career spanning more than six decades, Mr. Wilks introduced many innovative products to the infrared analysis marketplace. He held numerous patents on infrared instrumentation and sample handling techniques and published a long list of articles and technical papers on infrared technology. He served on the advisory board of Spectroscopy magazine and he was the recipient of many awards for his contributions to the field of infrared spectroscopy, including the Williams-Wright Award from the Coblentz Society of which he was a founding member, the 2004 Pittcon Heritage Award from the Chemical Heritage Foundation, and the Gold Metal Award from New York Section of the Society of Applied Spectroscopy.

Mr. Wilks married his wife, Laura, in 1947, and settled in Darien, where they raised their three children. He served on the Representative Town Meeting for more than 20 years and was ultimately chairman of the RTM Planning & Zoning Committee. More recently, he was a member of the town Conservation Commission. He was a long-time member of Wee Burn Country Club.

Mr. Wilks loved the water and for many years, he and his family would spend weekends and summer vacations boating on Long Island Sound and traveling to various ports on the East Coast. He enjoyed traveling around the world — whether for business or pleasure — and continued to do so until recently. He also loved horses and owned several trotters. He had the pleasure of being in the "Winner's Circle" on more than one occasion and even wrote and published a book on trotters.

Mr. Wilks is survived by his son, Mark H. Wilks, and his wife, Rowena, of New London, N.H.; his daughter, Sandra Rintoul, and her husband, Roger Schumann, of Boulder Creek, Calif.; his daughter-in-law, Maureen Fitzpatrick Wilks of Darien; and six grandchildren, Tyler Wilks, Dylan Wilks, Katherine Wilks, Joel Rintoul, Lyla Rintoul and Patrick Wilks.

Besides his wife who died in 2006, he was predeceased by a son, Donald K. Wilks, in 2004.

A memorial gathering and celebration of life will be held at 11 on Sunday, Oct. 26, at the Wee Burn Country Club, 410 Hollow Tree Ridge Road, Darien. Memorial donations may be made in Mr. Wilks' name to the Chemical Heritage Foundation, 315 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19106.

Chadwick Funeral Service of New London is assisting the family with arrangements.

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