



Mr. Harold L. Nelson

April 14, 1929 - April 10, 2026

Harold Leonard Nelson died on April 10, 2026, at age 96.

Born in Oneonta, N.Y., Harold earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) Troy N.Y. in 1951. He earned his Professional Engineer (PE) license in 1958.

Harold met his wife Joan “Jody” Nelson of 71 years through the RPI/Russell Sage College mountaineering club. They were married shortly after graduation and moved to Alaska where Harold began his professional career working for the Alaska Road Commission. He then served as 1st Lieutenant in the Air Force supporting a variety of civil engineering assignments at air bases in Texas, Greenland, and Minnesota. His commission and commitment in the Air Force was honorably completed in 1956.

Harold spent several years designing precast concrete bridges throughout New York, establishing a strong foundation in the industry. His curiosity led him to the innovative work of Jean M. Muller (1925-2005), the renowned inventor of precast segmental construction in Paris. In the mid-1950s, Muller was designing the Shelton bridge in upstate New York. Harold, eager to deepen his understanding, visited the site to study these pioneering techniques. This formative experience sparked his lifelong pursuit of technological advances in engineering.

In 1968, the Nelson family relocated to western Massachusetts (Pittsfield) where Harold joined the Unistress Corporation, as Vice President, General Manager, and lastly, as President. Harold's expertise continued to grow in the 1970s expanding to the design and construction of parking garages and commercial buildings. A notable highlight of his career during this period was his involvement in the expansion of Yankee Stadium. Throughout the 1980's, Harold's projects grew in scale and complexity. He contributed to the design and construction of larger bridges and malls, as well as a post-tensioned rod structure for the North River Wastewater Management Project in Manhattan. He also played a pivotal role in establishing the new Unistress manufacturing facility. In 1989, Basil A. (Rick) Petricca was quoted as saying "Harold Nelson, almost single-handedly, has been the driving force and inspiration for the growth and success of Unistress."

Harold and Jody lived adjacent to the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Canoe Meadows in Pittsfield. Harold spent many hours walking and cross-country skiing on the trails. He particularly liked watching the beavers at work constructing dams and took a keen interest in the efforts to clean up the Housatonic River pollution of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that impacted the sanctuary. Together, Harold and Jody traveled the world and enjoyed visiting many places around the globe. Harold and Jody were patrons of Tanglewood, and rarely missed an opportunity to hear the Boston Symphony.

Harold is predeceased by his loving wife Jody, and leaves behind his sister Karla, daughters Jennifer and Kristie, and four grandchildren. Known as the quintessential business gentleman, Harold was unwavering in his principles and commitment to the field, consistently upholding the highest standards throughout his professional life.

Funeral Notice:

A service will be held for Harold at a later date.

Tribute Wall

RB

“ Jody and Harold were such great people. We first met them on the tennis court a Richmond resident shared with the town. They lived in Richmond for several years and were a major part of the huge participation in tennis, including most of the Taconic high school tennis team for years. They were warm, thoughtful, wonderful friends. Sympathy to Kristie and Jen.

Ruth Bass

Ruth Bass - May 17 at 04:48 PM

DS

“ Dick and Holly Stover send our sincere condolences to the Nelson family. Harold and Jody lived in Richmond and were active members of the Richmond Congregational Church.

Dick Stover



Dick Stover - April 20 at 03:11 PM

CM

My life has been enhanced by knowing Harold Nelson. I only knew Harold a few short months as one of his caregivers through Home Instead. He welcomed me onboard with interest in finding out where I lived, how many children I had and what careers they chose. Then he would strike up interesting conversations about those things. Harold taught me about the Scandinavians and their cookies, Oneonta, "big 'a..' concrete", farming, hearing aids, the Times Union, trails in the ADK, his family & his uncle Nelson, and so much more. Harold was a very polite gentleman and expected the same from me. What struck me most about Harold was how smart he was yet so humble. There are only a handful of people I've known who have the whole package and Harold Nelson was one of them. I will always remember him and his smile. He had the best disposition. My heart breaks for you both Christie & Jennifer. You had a very special Father and I feel privileged to have known him. May God give you strength and comfort in your lose as only He can do.

*Cindy Morgan
Home Instead*

Cindy Morgan - May 19 at 06:53 PM

PK

“ *Harold and Jody have always been inspirations to us - from the day we met them- they were our next door neighbors who joined us on hundreds of adventures together.*

From croquet to dining at the Lenox Club together to hosting them at home for dozens of dinners- to sponsoring Birthday Celebrations together, life with Harold and Jody occupied our lives.

Harold was an intellect who discussed the opinion section of the NY Times at every outing together,

I was their favorite chef' and felt honored with that title.

Harold - you will be missed.

Phil & Maria Kampe

We LOVE YOU

philip Kampe - April 17 at 02:58 PM

KP

Thanks for the years of friendship Phil and Maria

Kristie Pease - April 18 at 07:58 PM

BP

“ *I first met Harold and Joan (Jody) a little over eleven (11) years ago. Harold loved to have conversation while sitting in his sunroom at his home in Pittsfield looking out to the sanctuary and October Mountain. His interest in learning about me, my life experiences, and working career was always genuine. Harold was always kind to me from the very first day we met. Harold experienced a very long and interesting early life, career, and retirement. Harold possessed a deep passion for everything he pursued, albeit career, travel, music, education, art, and family connection. Harold was fortunate to have shared his passion (s) with his loving wife and family members over many years. Harold informed me on several occasions that he was fortunate to have experienced life fully. As a world traveler his stories about the many places he visited were to be admired and among the many places he visited, he loved traveling to Paris. Harold also loved his career and business dealings in New York City. When driving his car or giving directions while I drove Harold he would sometimes take the most circuitous route possible. I am not sure, but I think it was to demonstrate his geographical knowledge of the area or to point out the places most interesting to him. Truthfully, I never asked him why he did this. Even after many visits to Pittsfield, he would still give me directions from the passenger side of the car. I eventually just went with the flow. Reflecting upon my numerous trips to Pittsfield, I will dearly miss Harold, my conversations with Harold, and my meaningful relationship with him. God Bless.*

Bruce K Pease-Son-in-law

Bruce Pease - April 16 at 12:59 PM