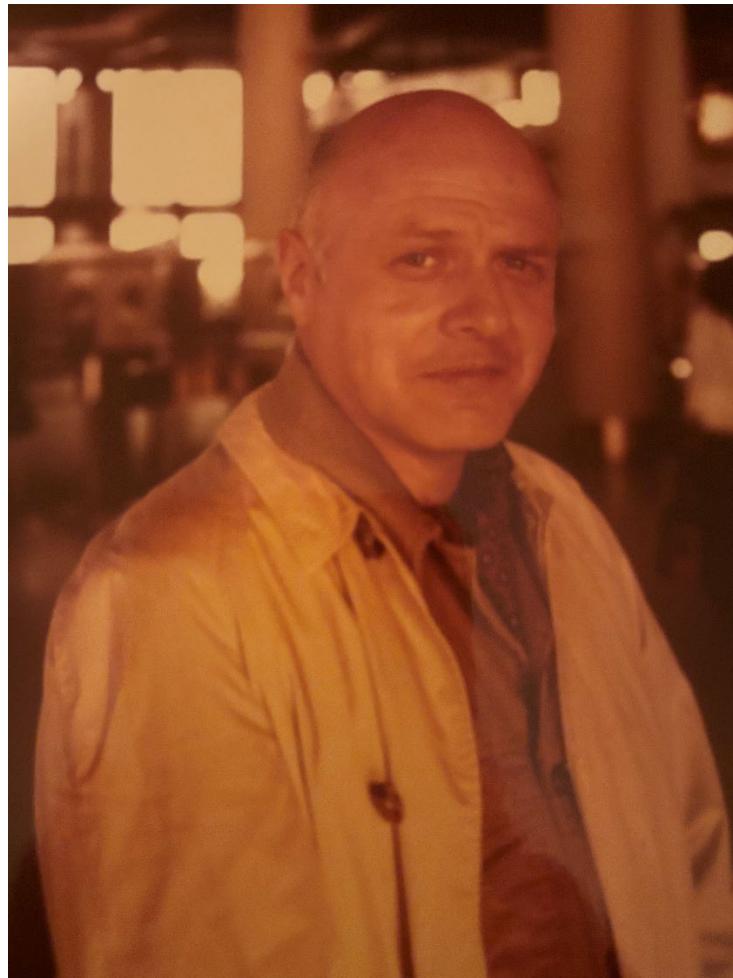


In memoriam—Henry Booke



If he was notified that this note of celebration was being written, it is possible that his response would not be wholly positive... nor wholly fit for print. All the same, on July 5, 2025, the fisheries community lost Henry Booke, and the passing of this influential leader, scientist and mentor should not go unnoticed.

Henry was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1932, to Sol and Sylvia Booke. He graduated from Andes Central School and began his service to our nation with U.S. Army Intelligence from 1954 to 1957 in Germany. Following an honorable discharge, he attended Cornell University and received a B.S. in 1959. Along the way he met— and then married— his college sweetheart, Norma Jean Wilcox. This partnership was built to last— enduring for 66 years. Anyone witnessing the intimate banter between these two knows that they kept each other on their toes for decades. As Henry once put it "...we don't suffer fools around here." Norma was with Henry until the end.

Henry pursued his advanced degrees at Michigan State University, earning his MS in 1962 and his PhD in 1967. His doctoral dissertation focused on the genetic differences among corogonids, using methods such as DNA karyotype analysis that were the cutting-edge tools of the day.

Henry was dedicated to higher learning and academic excellence. He taught at Yale University (1968–1969) and Boston University (1969–1972). In 1973, he was hired as assistant unit leader in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Cooperative Research Unit program at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, where he promoted management to increase genetic considerations of native fish stocks in the Great

Lakes. This was at a time that the Stock Concept was developing and was to play an important role in understanding fish population restoration.

In 1980, he was selected as Unit Leader (1980–1988) at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He actively engaged with Connecticut River restoration efforts coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, became a leader and well-known character in the region. In 1989, Henry was selected as the first scientific director of the new Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Laboratory in Turners Falls, Massachusetts (now the U.S. Geological Survey). The research vision for the laboratory was unique, bringing together and integrating the expertise of engineers, behavioral ecologists, geneticists, and physiologists to approach migratory fish restoration in the Connecticut River and worldwide.

Henry understood that his and the laboratory's success was going to be judged on number and quality of scientific publications, collaborations, and partnerships. The team he built developed extensive research and innovations in fish passage, fish design, physiology, and ecology of anadromous fish. During this time, Henry's leadership brought the Conte Laboratory to its international stature and influenced the professional careers of researchers and personnel alike. After retiring, he moved to Corvallis, Oregon, to be near his son Charlie and explore his wife Norma's family heritage on "the ranch."

Henry was strongly committed to AFS. He was a Life Member and Golden Member (1961–2011). He served as Wisconsin Chapter Secretary-Treasurer (1976–1977) and as the Northeastern Division President (1996). He was the chairman the investment committees of both AFS (until 2014) and the Western Division (2000–2015), as well as the Oregon Chapter's Education and Outreach Committee (2000–2003). Henry (together with Norma) spent countless hours guiding AFS' investment strategy in support of AFS student scholarships and travel grants. Henry's contributions were appropriately recognized with a Distinguished Service Award by AFS in 2007, and an Award of Special Recognition by WDAFS in 2011. The AFS Financial Planning and Procedures Committee and the WDAFS Financial Sustainability Committee continue to honor, and benefit from, the Bookes' contributions by maintaining the successful investments they initiated.

Among these and other impacts in his 93 years, Henry instilled an appreciation of the outdoors in many, including his son Charlie. His interests were also diverse, and perhaps surprising. Henry's professional dedication did not prevent him from the occasional return to New York City for a cooking class or indulging in a nerdy affinity for model trains.

Henry was a unique and unforgettable person who believed in the power of science to improve the sustainability of natural resources. His usual salutation, "what do you want?" was a multipurpose greeting and challenge to shake people from complacency. Those that did not shrink from his parlance were met with a caring and committed advocate and mentor. He worked tirelessly to promote excellence in science, both in his own career and through encouragement and support of others. Henry left his mark through this legacy.

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