

Melvin M. Levine

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Melvin Mordecai Levine, a longtime and much beloved resident of Saranac Lake, died peacefully on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, at the age of 88.

Mel, as he was known, first came to Saranac Lake in 1949 to recover from tuberculosis at Trudeau Sanatorium. He later returned to retire after an accomplished career as a nuclear physicist.

Born in 1925 in Richmond, Va., to Samuel, a tailor from Lithuania, and his wife Leah, who was born in Newcastle, England, Mel was raised in Lake City, S.C. At the age of 16, he was admitted to MIT, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in physics. During World War II he served in the U.S. Naval Reserve. In 1949, while attending Columbia University, he contracted tuberculosis and came to the Trudeau Sanatorium in Saranac Lake to recover. During his convalescence he met Lilo Guggenheim, a nurse and former patient at Trudeau. They were married in 1950 and moved to Charlottesville, where in 1954 Mel earned a Ph.D in physics from the University of Virginia. He was employed for several years at Babcock and Wilcox, a leading technology firm in Lynchburg, Va. From there he went to Brookhaven National Laboratory in Long Island, where he was a senior scientist in the department of nuclear reactor safety.



During his long and distinguished career, Mel authored and co-authored numerous scientific papers on nuclear safety. He also served as an adjunct professor of Nuclear Engineering at Columbia University and a Professor of Nuclear Engineering at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. Upon his retirement, he volunteered as a math teacher in local prisons and as a computer teacher at St. Bernard's School in Saranac Lake. He also served on the board of the Saranac Lake Free Library.

He is survived by his wife Lilo and their three children: Susan (Michael) Fox, Wendy and David (Sara); and four grandchildren: Owen, Katie, Hannah and Louis.