

# THE GREATER KANSAS CITY CORNISH CONNECTION

(SINCE 1994)

A newsletter of Cornish history, culture and events of interest to the Cornish of Missouri & Kansas

## Powes yn Cres

*This newsletter has two subjects: the most immediate is the picnic scheduled for the 21<sup>st</sup> of June at the home of Gordon and Betty Cotton (details on page 3). The other is the dedication of this issue to Don Whitman, founding member and tireless leader of our society. The above Cornish reads "Rest in Peace." Don passed away on April 17<sup>th</sup>. We all miss Don greatly, but will do whatever we can to persevere and carry on the Society without him.*

*Mary and I debated whether both the obituary and the article in the KC Star should be included, since they are available on our web site: <<http://www.greaterkccornishsociety.com>>. Then it occurred to me that some members might have access to neither the Star nor the internet. That is why I'm including both. Frank*

### Whitman, Donald R.

Donald R. Whitman, 76, of Kansas City, Mo., passed away peacefully on Thursday, April 17, at Hospice House after a nine-month battle with brain and lung cancer. He will be missed by the many people throughout the world whose lives he touched with humor and kindness.

Don was born October 6, 1931, in Buffalo, Mo., and graduated from Buffalo High School in 1949. He served in the United States Air Force and was stationed in the Marshall Islands in weather reconnaissance for Operation Ivy, the detonation of the first hydrogen bomb. He studied meteorology and earth science at Washington State University in Seattle and the University of Missouri, Kansas City, where he received his degree.

His career was in meteorology with the National Weather Service. In 1975 he was honored as a Silver Medal Award Winner by the United States Department of Commerce. At that time he was the Assistant Director for Meteorology and Management at the Technical Training Center of the National Weather Service in Kansas City, Mo. Don was cited as being the driving force behind the training program, which resulted in a substantial increase in technical competence and a dramatic improvement in the morale and dedication of field personnel. Don was quite sensitive to the handicapped and minorities and was a strong proponent of programs to aid these people. The special technical courses that he developed for Alaskan natives and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Scientific Upward Mobility Program were highly successful.

Don developed an interest in Cornwall, one of six Celtic nations, and traveled to Cornwall twice in the last decade. He has been the editor of the Greater Kansas City Cornish Society Newsletter since its inception, available online at ([www.greaterkccornishsociety.com](http://www.greaterkccornishsociety.com)). He was an activist for justice, fairness, equality, and preservation of Celtic heritage. On April 16, the day before his death, the Cornish American Heritage Society nominated Don for the first Founding Members' Award for foresight, initiative and dedication in support of Cornwall and the greater Celtic family in the United States.

He was preceded in death by his father, Ray Whitman, his stepfather, Elzie Faucett, and his sister Nancy Sue Hombs and his wife Polly. He is survived by his wife, Marjorie Roberts, his mother, Lillian, his daughter Kathi, his granddaughter Jessica, and his extensive step family: Jennifer and Jeff French of Santa Monica, Calif., Alex and Azar Freeburne of Olathe, Joy and Lee Kimzey of Overland Park, Jill and Mike Davis of Overland Park and grandchildren Ellen, Emily, Sarah, Whitney, Dylan, Spencer, Alyssa, Arianna and Amber. He is also survived by numerous cousins and friends from his church and Sunday School class, the Greater Kansas City Cornish Society, his Brookside neighborhood, the National Weather Service and Atomic Veterans.

A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, April 23, at Central United Methodist Church, 5144 Oak St., Kansas City, MO 64112. A visitation will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. prior to the service. Contributions may be made to Kansas City Hospice. Cremation.

*Published in the Kansas City Star on 4/20/2008.*

Afterword:

Those of us who were able to attend the memorial on April 23<sup>rd</sup> can attest to the wonderful event it was.

A visitation was held before hand and had goodies and beverages and tables of Don's photographs. People then went into the sanctuary. The place was full. People representing all areas of Don's busy and productive life spoke, including our own Eleanor Symons. The reception afterwards was what one would expect from Don and Marge: food and drink "stations" both in and outside. If you didn't leave with a few extra pounds on you, you weren't trying. Fortunately the weather held off until things were breaking up a little. We got into a pretty good sized rain on the way taking Eleanor back to Lawrence and ourselves to Manhattan, but we weathered it well I think. The rain slackened after we let Eleanor off.

*Following is the second piece from the KC Star, Monday May 12, 2008:*

**Tribute: Donald R. Whitman was an Earth lover who watched the skies**

By JOYCE TSAI

The Kansas City Star

**Who:** Donald R. Whitman, 76, of Kansas City.

**How and when he died:** April 17 of brain and lung cancers.

**Operation Ivy:** In the Air Force, Donald R. Whitman was part of the team that did weather reconnaissance on the Marshall Islands for Operation Ivy, the first denotation of the hydrogen bomb. His job was to measure winds and watch for storms.

"He was just following instructions, and it wasn't until later he realized the implications," said his wife, Marjorie Roberts. "He thought it was pretty awesome to have seen what its capabilities were, but it was too bad that we couldn't use it for peaceful things."

He was a member of the Atomic Veterans. About 400,000 U. S. service members were exposed to radiation with the atomic bombing of Japan or testing of nuclear weapons in the 1940s through early 1960s. He was about 21 when he served in the effort. Years later, many of his peers died of leukemia and various cancers. When he was diagnosed with the two cancers, "he wasn't surprised by it," his wife said.

**Weatherman:** Whitman had a love for the Earth and the environment that expressed itself in an interest in meteorology and earth sciences. He had a long and honored career with the National Weather Service. As an assistant director for meteorology and management at the Technical Training Center of the National Weather Service in Kansas City, he helped train field personnel to spot weather patterns and storms. He also went to Alaska about eight times to train native Alaskans to staff weather stations. Few forecasters wanted to move into the Arctic Circle, so it was crucial to train those living there.

**Cornish legacy:** Whitman and his first wife started the Greater Kansas City Cornish Society together in 1994. She was Cornish, a descendent of immigrants from Cornwall, the most southwestern county in England. He was Irish, and when she died, he remained dedicated to the group. He wished to preserve their Celtic heritage and teach others about the often-overlooked history of the Cornish. He thought that the group had been largely ignored by English history. They were referred to as "ancient Britons," for example — even though they had their own rich legacy that reached back much further than the English.

"He was the driving force in the Cornish group," said Gordon Cotton, a friend and Cornishman. "He was the publisher, writer and editor of the newsletter — and an all-around good guy. He went out of his way to help anyone that needed it."

**Science fair judge:** Whitman was also a tireless judge at local science fair competitions for 35 years. He enjoyed encouraging kids in their love of science.

"He was a people person," Roberts said. "Even if the project wasn't really that great or stupendous, he would find something good in what they were doing. He always found at least one nice thing to say."

**Survivors:** His wife, mother, one daughter, four stepchildren, 10 grandchildren and other relatives.

**The final word:** "He was an earth scientist and environmentalist," his daughter, Kathi Whitman, said. "And he believed very strongly that we are stewards of the land ... and we need to change."

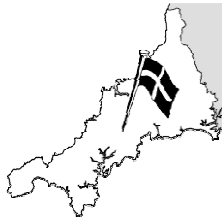
**Potluck Picnic**  
**Saturday, June 21**  
**12:30 pm**

At the home of Gordon and Betty Cotton:  
12460 South Ellsworth  
Olathe, Kansas 66062-4969

R.S.V.P. appreciated  
913 829 2068  
goblue1941@gmail.com

Directions: I35 S from I435 on the Kansas side. Exit 119th Street. Turn left at the top of the ramp (going east). Turn right on Black Bob (south). Turn right on 125th St.

As a tribute to Don, please be thinking of some reminiscence of him you might care to share. I'll start off here, and then maybe contribute something more there. We hope to see you there.



*Personal reminiscences:*

I met Don and Polly, if I remember aright, at the Mineral Point Festival in 2001. This was Woad's last hurrah. Woad was the band from the Twin Cities I was in and we had put out a CD just prior to breaking up, as Mary and I were headed home to Kansas and other band members were moving elsewhere as well. We had rented a place in Manhattan and Mary was job hunting, so she didn't attend and I needed a ride to Kansas City. I think it was band mate Danny Proud who helped make the connection with Don and Polly who graciously agreed to an extra passenger.

It was a fun ride home. Mary was notified to meet us in Kansas City at a hotel off 435. We were friends from the get go. Well, they were that way, weren't they?

We still hadn't found a house to buy when we got a call from Don, telling us of a friend of his we ought to look up because he was of Welsh heritage and we would probably hit it off. Of course we lost his name. But Don had told his friend and that friend had told the pastor and it just happened by chance that we happened to go to that church and when the pastor learned our names and a little background he said there was someone we ought to meet. That was how I met John Davies and got to know him, both Mary and I. He had been a meteorological colleague of Don's. I was privileged to sing in Welsh at his funeral a few months later.

Ny yskynner war venydhyow dre vyrras orta.  
Mountains are not climbed by looking at them.

Don certainly was a climber, not a looker.

Frank

A donation in Don Whitman's memory was made by our Greater Kansas City Cornish Society to the Stephen R. Curnow Memorial Fund of the Cornish American Heritage Society to fund the second place award of the Steven R. Curnow Competition.

When a second prize is awarded, it will be awarded as the Polly and Don Whitman award.

The annual competition awards students, aged 19 and under for research and resulting projects which highlight Cornish Legacy in North America. More information can be found on the CAHS web site: < <http://www.cousinjack.org/curnow.html> >