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Citation	Edwards, G. T., Robbins, W. G., Hoppes, K., & Tamura, L. (2014). Eckard V. Toy, Jr.: March 19, 1931-October 7, 2013. Oregon Historical Quarterly, 115(1), 122-128. doi:10.5403/oregonhistq.115.1.0122
DOI	10.5403/oregonhistq.115.1.0122
Publisher	Oregon Historical Society
Version	Version of Record
Terms of Use	http://cdss.library.oregonstate.edu/sa-termsfuse

A TRIBUTE

Eckard V. Toy, Jr.

March 19, 1931 — October 7, 2013

Dr. Eckard V. Toy, Jr., grew up in the Pacific Northwest and earned his Ph.D. in American history at the University of Oregon. Beginning with his 1959 Master's thesis, "The Ku Klux Klan in Oregon: Its Charter and Program," the Klan and related topics were a primary focus of his research and writing. After teaching at several universities in the Midwest and on the Pacific Coast, he retired to the Hood River Valley. He is remembered here by friends and colleagues.

IN 1958, WHILE ON THE faculty at Roosevelt Junior High in Eugene, Oregon, I met Eckard Toy, who came there to do his student teaching. We soon began a lifelong friendship. With wit and insight, he evaluated the school's students, teachers, and administration. We both determined not to teach at that level.

I soon resigned and pursued an M.A. in history at the University of Oregon. Eckard taught briefly at Estacada High School and then joined me as a graduate student at the university, pursuing advanced degrees in history. We took classes together and lived with our families in the Amazon Housing Project. We had several things in common, including school-teaching wives and our service in the

military occupation of Germany. That experience, unique to our generation, provided both humorous stories and the G.I. Bill.

We enjoyed friendship with fellow students, but Eckard and I were particularly close and supported each other as we crossed graduate school hurdles. We appreciated several professors — Wendell Stephenson (who supervised our M.A. theses), Earl Pomeroy, Bing Bingham, and Bob Smith. Archivist Martin Schmitt found materials for our Ph.D. dissertations. Eckard was an outstanding graduate student — a dedicated researcher, competent teacher, and skilled writer. We students knew he would make his mark in twentieth century American history.



Historian Eckard V. Toy, Jr., enjoyed being outdoors and taking photographs of changing fall colors after his retirement from university teaching.

In 1966, I taught at Whitman College and Eckard held a teaching position at Washington State; our families met in Walla Walla or Pullman. As director of a National Defense Education (NDEA) Institute, I hired my friend, heard his stimulating lectures, and read his outstanding teaching evaluations.

Over the following decades, we frequently corresponded and occasionally met. In 1983, Eckard filled a vacancy in my department; students told me that he conducted thoughtful and humorous classes. He impressed them — as he did professors — with

his solid understanding of American history and historians.

While teaching in Illinois, his family hosted me, and he drove me to New Salem because he recognized my interest in Abraham Lincoln. This was typical of Eckard; he never missed an opportunity to assist a friend.

On his return to the West Coast, we often met and discussed friends, history, politics, and our growing children. Eckard carefully commented on my writings; friends informed me that they also sought his opinion on various academic subjects. He sent me some



Eckard V. Toy, Jr., eats K-rations in the West German forest in 1953.

of his factual and analytical essays and exchanges with scholars. He was an excellent speaker, reaching general as well as specialized audiences. At a Tacoma history conference he patiently allowed me to encroach on his time. We expressed satisfaction in publishing our essays in *Experiences in a Promised Land* and in *Citadel of the Spirit*.

In our retirement, we exchanged even more emails and telephone calls.

They were often about our grandchildren and the good times we enjoyed from Eugene to his Mt. Hood orchard. He often expressed great pride in his grandchildren and always asked after mine. In his seventies as in his twenties, Eckard voiced candid, informed, and witty assessments of contemporary individuals and institutions.

Eckard often expressed concern about the health of mutual friends

but was very reluctant to discuss his prolonged medical problems.

For more than six decades, Eckard was one of my most valued friends, a sentiment I fully expressed at his

eightieth birthday celebration. His steady friendship improved the quality of my life. I deeply miss him.

—G. THOMAS EDWARDS
Whitman College, emeritus

FIRST AND FOREMOST, Eckard Toy was a captivating public speaker, capable of rousing audiences to laughter and joyful tears — as I witnessed in Bellingham, Washington, at the Pacific Northwest History Conference in May 1984. When attendees exited a Friday mid-morning session, many of them noisily laughing aloud, I asked about all the commotion. A friend remarked that Eckard Toy had just presented a paper, “Mark Hatfield, Arthur Langlie, and the Prayer Breakfast.” (Arthur Langlie was a puritanical teetotaler and three-term governor of Washington. The younger Hatfield was then one of Oregon’s U.S. Senators and also a teetotaler.) The point to this anecdote is to underscore Eckard’s special talents in using irony and humor to explain historical events. He had what many historians lack — a gift for presenting uncomfortable historical episodes in a way that allowed students to see the dark side of American history through off-centered observations. And in the midst of those who attacked unpopular political views, he remained a staunch defender of civil liberties and the right to freedom of expression.

Eckard, who was a visiting professor for much of four years at Oregon State University during the 1980s, excelled in the classroom through his

characteristic skill in tracing historical happenings with intelligence and wit. He treated both undergraduate and graduate students with respect, engaging with great interest their research proposals. Eckard had far less patience with pomposity in the historical profession, singling out for censure those who thought too well of themselves. And at meetings of the Pacific Northwest History Conference, the Western History Association, and other professional gatherings, he was always willing to speak out in his firm, clear voice against questionable historical judgment. No one ever accused Eckard Toy of being a wilting flower!

“One Hundred Percent Americanism,” hoods, burning crosses, black helicopters, ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government), Christian Identity Movement, nativism/racism, and constitutional militias were terms that appeared frequently in his public speaking and published articles. A specialist in ultraconservative, radical-right fringe groups, Eckard collected information on their activities through a post office box listed under a pseudonym. He used those documents to reveal the dark, sinister side of the American story, but he would also argue that such groups were not far removed from the American main-

stream — the violent racism directed against Oregon’s Indian people, the persecution of Chinese in the late nineteenth century, the incarceration of Japanese American citizens after Pearl Harbor, or the segregation of Portland’s African Americans during and after World War II. “War spares few innocents,” he wrote in 2001, “and truth and civil liberties are among its first casualties” (OHQ, Winter 2001, p. 416).

In the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, Marianne Keddington-Lang, editor of the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, asked Eckard to offer historical perspective on the recent attacks on the American

mainland. He reworked an existing manuscript to incorporate the 9/11 events, and the revised article, “Oregon at War,” was published in the Winter 2001 issue. Before the American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, Eckard reflected, “the legacies of war are haunting and permanent.” He questioned the wisdom of American participation in overseas ventures — the intangibles — the human cost in lives, disfigurement, and mental wounds. In this — one of his finest essays — Eckard Toy raised devilish questions that we live with still

—WILLIAM G. ROBBINS
*Emeritus Distinguished Professor
Oregon State University, Corvallis*

I NEVER TOOK a class from Eckard Toy, but I certainly was one of his students. Many years ago, as I began the path for an academic life, I met Eckard. His name was given to me by my thesis advisor who told me that I REALLY needed to talk with Eckard. My academic interest was ultra conservatism in the Pacific Northwest — and Eckard was *the* scholar best known in the field.

After a few weeks of my advisor ‘sasking me if I had contacted Eckard yet, I finally succumbed to the task. My anxieties about making a “cold call” were quickly dissipated. It was a warm, friendly, and funny conversation. Eckard was willing to help me in my academic endeavors — to act as a guide in the field, but more importantly, as a sounding board to help me reflect

on and create a sound interpretation of the history of American right-wing radicalism.

I had the honor of presenting several academic papers with Eckard on the same panels. Eckard was always insightful, challenging, and kind. He had a way of helping fellow scholars by asking the most important questions and encouraging all to think more deeply about the history surrounding us. Eckard had a boundless energy for ideas, history, historiography, teaching, and learning. He spoke his mind with passion, clarity, and composure. I believe he abhorred hypocrisy and respected integrity in all things, both professional and personal.

The academic world has lost an important voice. Eckard’s works on

such things as the Ku Klux Klan in Oregon (Tillamook and Eugene), the Oxford Group and the strike of the Seattle longshoremen in 1934, race relations on the Pacific Coast in the 1920s, the Silvershirts in the Northwest, the failure of an Ultraconservative ideal of “Spiritual Mobilization” in the 1950s, and the John Birch Society in the Pacific Northwest illustrate what careful research, quiet tone, and sharp analysis can achieve. Eckard’s work will continue to be read and debated

— he will long remain a major force for historians writing about the Pacific Northwest, political extremism, and ultraconservatism.

I will miss, and always remember, his soft, warm, ever-present smile and the opportunity to engage with him about anything. And so will many, many others. There has indeed passed away a singular, graceful man from this earth.

—KAREN HOPPES, PH.D.
Lakeridge High School

I MET ECKARD Toy in 1992, when he attended my session at the Pacific Northwest History conference in Salem. Two days later, he sent me a letter, enclosing his CV and inviting me for coffee or tea to discuss our common scholarship. That was my introduction to the thoughtful, honest, erudite, and discriminating Dr. Eckard V. Toy. Even though we spoke and wrote only occasionally, I gained respect for his intellect, his generosity, and his deep perspective on racial, cultural, and political issues. We shared a love of the valley in the Columbia River Gorge that became home to him for the last twenty-two years of his life. And we both had sensitivities to controversial topics that had become a focus in each of our studies.

When I asked his views about collecting differing local perspectives about the noxious wartime reputation of my hometown community, he encouraged me. “It is past time to open

the local memory banks,” he maintained, before adding: “Perhaps we should continue to search for a good answer.” Eckard helped me understand the early-1900s changes in the Hood River Valley, when an influx of newcomers brought to the isolated community fresh national perspectives, increased social and cultural diversity, and more cosmopolitan views.

The kindly, honest professor was certainly generous in publicly sharing insights, and he offered balance on controversial topics. Eckard authored four entries for *The Oregon Encyclopedia* (www.oregonencyclopedia.org). His account of the Ku Klux Klan is still the most popular entry over five years, with over 22,000 total visits and an increase of 2,000 hits each succeeding year. He was a key figure in Thomas Coulter’s award-winning 2009 documentary, *The Ku Klux Klan in Oregon: 1920–1923*, which portrayed the Klan’s influence over politics in our state.

Eckard proudly showed me photos of his grandchildren, “a candelabra,” he told me, with their Japanese, German, and African heritage. He embraced the acceptance of differences, especially in addressing contemporary immigration issues. Ever the teacher, he insisted: “There has to be a consciousness of what went wrong, an understanding of why it went wrong, why we behaved as we did, and how we can change.”

Recognizing how I was smitten by the grandiose view of Mount Hood from Eckard and his wife Pat’s Parkdale yard, he gave me an open invitation to view the landscape from their home, even when it became a “slushy place of melting snow.” While that thought is appealing, my own private image of the modest historian with the gentle heart will remain intact.

—LINDA TAMURA
Willamette University



Eckard V. Toy, Jr., poses for a photograph as an infant in Longview, Washington, in about 1931.



Eckard V. Toy, Jr., and his great-great niece Tenley sit together in about 2012.