

Long-time public servant Dr. V. Harry Adrounie dies

by Elaine Gilbert
Assistant Editor

Dr. V. Harry Adrounie, a Hastings icon who had local, state and worldwide influence, died at his home this week, apparently on Tuesday. He was 94.

No other details were available at press time. An obituary will be published at a later date, according to Lauer Family Funeral Home, Wren Chapel, which is handling arrangements, in Hastings.

Adrounie was an international authority in

environmental and public health and was a retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel.

He studied and taught environmental and public health issues for 65 years during his military career and civilian life. He has taught at the University of Hawaii, American University in Armenia, American University in Beirut and in the Middle East and South America.

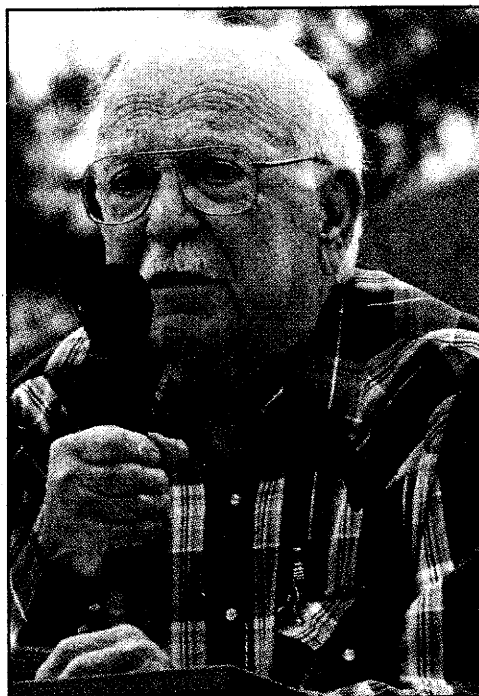
Adrounie, who had doctorates in public health and the environment, developed, implemented and managed environmental health programs on a world-wide basis and developed and operated clinical laboratories for large hospitals and medical services.

About nine years ago he served as chairman of a new national Children's Health Committee comprised of emeritus members of the American Public Health Association. He brought together six other public health experts from around the United States to develop a curriculum kit to educate kindergartners through eighth graders on a variety of health-related topics. The curriculum later was expanded through twelfth grade.

Locally, prior to his death, Adrounie served as chairman of the Barry County Solid Waste Oversight Committee and the County Solid Waste Planning Committee, posts he held for many years.

Ken Neil, a personal friend of Adrounie for about 30 years, had the highest regard for Adrounie, calling him a man "of character and integrity."

When Adrounie retired from the Air Force and returned to Hastings, Neil said Adrounie wanted Barry County to have a Solid Waste



Dr. V. Harry Adrounie

Plan, and that was before such plans were mandated by the state. Adrounie served as chairman of that project and Neil was vice chairman. "It was one of the first ones in the state," Neil said.

He said Adrounie was proud of his service to his country and was well-respected at every military base they visited. Neil accompanied Adrounie to Panama and saw that respect

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first-hand and also when he went with Adrounie to attend alumni banquets at his alma mater, St. Ambrose in Davenport, Iowa.

"I enjoyed him," Neil said. "I learned something new every time I talked to him.

"He's going to be missed on the solid waste committees and for his environmental knowledge," Neil said.

At the time of his death, Adrounie also was still active on the Barry County Department of Human Services (DHS) Board, which oversees the operation of Thornapple Manor among other duties. He had served on the DHS Board since 1998, and chairman since 2004.

"He was extremely supportive of Thornapple Manor, and was with us throughout the design and construction phases of our recent renovation," said Thornapple Manor Administrator Jim DeYoung. "I am very happy that he got to see it through to its completion and speak at the grand opening last August. Harry was very proud of the support that the community has provided to us over the years."

DeYoung said Adrounie "was very kind, friendly, and generous to us and to this community, and always had a smile on his face. He will be dearly missed."

Adrounie also was a former member of the City of Hastings Planning Commission and a former commander of the American Legion Post in Hastings where he was still a member.

On the state level, in tribute to 15 years of dedication and work to try to persuade Michigan lawmakers and several governors to insist that private laboratories meet high standards, Michigan legislation was named after Adrounie about six years ago. Signed into law by Governor Jennifer Granholm, the legislation is called The V. Harry Adrounie Laboratory Data Quality Assurance Act.

At the time of the signing, Adrounie commented, "I was really surprised that they put my name on it.

"I'm happy it passed for the people of Michigan. After all, that's why I fought for it so long because it's really needed. Without proper laboratory results, you never know what's going to happen, especially in these days with the bio-terrorism (threats)," Adrounie had said.

He gave much of the credit for the passage of the legislation to State Senator Patricia Birkholz, R-24th District and to Bob Wilson, policy advisor to the Michigan Senate majority leader.

Birkholz, one of the bill's sponsors, said at the time of the passage, "It was an honor to work with such a dedicated and strongly committed scientist. Dr. Adrounie knew this issue thoroughly and yet knew when and where to compromise to move the legislation. His dedication and perseverance made this law."

Wilson was quoted at the time as saying, "It's a very high honor" for Adrounie to have the act named after him.

Wilson and Adrounie worked together the entire 15 years to get the idea for a laboratory accreditation program enacted into law to make sure private commercial laboratories' reports and tests are accurate, consistent and reliable when submitted to the state for environmental clean-ups, etc.

Wilson called Adrounie "a fantastic human being," "a great role model" and "a wonderful public servant."

Adrounie "didn't do it for money or notoriety, he did it because it was the right thing to do," Wilson said of Adrounie's efforts to promote the legislation.

Adrounie also had served as a member of the state Hazardous Waste Policy Committee and the Michigan Underground Storage Tank Finance Assurance Policy Board and was a former director of the Berrien County Environmental Health Division.

Adrounie received many awards during his lifetime. Among them was an award for 10 years of service and contributions to Underwriters Laboratories Inc., an independent, nonprofit product-safety testing and certification organization. He had served for a decade on the Underwriters Laboratories' Environmental & Public Health Council.

In 2003, he was surprised to receive an award from the American Public Health Association Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement. He knew that he was going to be speaking at the APHA's annual meeting in San Francisco, but after his talk he became speechless when presented with an award, he told the Banner.

"I'm really surprised I'm still getting awards," he told a reporter. "It sure surprised me. For about half a minute I was speechless, which is unusual for me," he said with laughter.

Adrounie is survived by his wife, Agnes, two sons and other relatives.