

Little known heroes of the nuclear age, part 4

Pamela Kramish Jones is the daughter of Arnold Kramish. She noted that the recent trip to Oak Ridge was extremely meaningful to her and her whole family. One facet of the Manhattan Project that impressed her was the contributions of so many people to one goal. The Calutron Girls' story stood out as one example of the lay people who played a crucial role in the project. Although they did not have the technical background to fully understand the meaning of their work, their dedication to working with precision helped achieve the common goal of winning the war.

She said, "Focusing on my dad's Philadelphia story was the best way I could contribute to the collective stories of so many remarkable people." I agree; the stories of single individuals who dedicated their knowledge and skill toward a common goal created the end result of peace and have helped maintain the world free of a third World War for 65 plus years. Arnold Kramish was one of those individuals.

Here is Pamela's brief account of life with her father, Arnold Kramish:

"Although I was aware of my father's role in the Manhattan Project, to me, he was mainly my Dad. As a young girl, I noticed his paper weight with a drawing of an atom on it on his desk. He shared his interest in science and math with me and my brother. He taught me the parts of the atom, bought me a microscope, and also played math games with us. When we were riding in the car, he'd instruct us to pick a number, keep it to ourselves, do a series of calculations with it and tell him what we got. Somehow he always guessed our original number. We thought it was magic.

"In middle school, my class saw a film of the Hiroshima bombing, and I began to grasp the magnitude of it. However, my world revolved around typical teen interests, education, a career, marriage, and eventually full time motherhood. *The Griffin* was published the same year I gave birth to my oldest child, and I focused on child rearing. Our time with my father was family oriented. I was one of many people who assumed that he was working on his memoirs and who hoped to read them one day. However, that hope would not materialize. I join those who wish he had been able to contribute them to the world. Visiting the Y-12 complex was a realization of my desire to pass my father's history on to my children.

"I do have treasured memories of the leading role he played in our lives in his later years: grandfather. My father adored his grandchildren, and like me, they idolized him. He was extremely proud of them. Although known for his intellectual pursuits, my father could also patiently play children's games. He read bedtime stories, and even made up his own. He also discussed science with them and challenged them with the same math games he had played with me.

"There is a saying in the Talmud that states "and whoever saves the life of a single human being ... it is as if he had saved an entire world". This emphasizes the immeasurable value of every individual and this idea is certainly apparent in the history of the Y-12 complex. Standing with my family in the Y-12 complex listening to historian Ray Smith recount the events of the Philadelphia accident, I was grateful that my father survived. However, we also appreciate that his contribution was part of a grand synchronized effort of many individuals, each with a unique and essential role. Together, they saved the entire free world.

"My father's narrative of the Philadelphia accident is distinct among his writings. This author of scientific documents and meticulously researched historical accounts paradoxically attributed his recovery to the power of his mother's chicken soup. When he refused the Catholic Last Rites, he asserted that he was Jewish. My father was usually private about his religion, but as he recounted the days he feared would be his last, he publically denoted that it was central to him. This disclosure resonated with me.

“On the morning of June 15, 2010, my husband and I were the first to arrive at my father’s hospital room. Other family members, including my mother and brother, would arrive in a short while. The nurse informed me that she had just given my father a shot of morphine, and asked me if there was anything she could do for me. We understood the implication. My father was unconscious. He could no longer express his wishes, but he had written that “certain fundamentals dominate” at such a time. This was the time, and it was to be acknowledged according to his tradition. I asked her to call the Rabbi. He arrived quickly, and in the presence of family, recited the final prayers.”

Thank you, Pamela, for giving us the insight from your perspective of a great man and his influence on your life and the lives of the rest of his family. Your father was certainly one of the little known heroes of the Manhattan Project, but he was also a really good author. I am enjoying reading *The Griffin!*