

## In Memory of Vinse Oviatt

Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup> December saw the funeral of Vinse Oviatt who died suddenly aged 88 on Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup> December.

Many of those present at the funeral service will have known Vinse as a charming and well respected figure around Crail, well known for his love of music (he sang for many years in the church choir, Anstruther Philharmonic Society, the Priory Singers and The Strolling Players) and for the way he quietly worked on behalf of so many community groups over the 25 years that he and his wife Fiona lived in Crail. He was a church elder, was on the Crail Festival Society committee for several years and was a major player in the creation and running of Crail Children's Centre.



Perhaps few will be aware of Vinse's life and achievements in the 63 years before settling in Crail.

Vinson Romero Oviatt was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1926 in Huron, South Dakota, USA. After High School in Miller, South Dakota where his family moved when he was just 8, and a brief wartime spell in the US Army, Vinse attended South Dakota State University where he attained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering. He followed this with a Masters Degree in Public Health from The University of Michigan. It was in the field of Occupational and Environmental Health that Vinse devoted the rest of his professional life.

He personally felt that one of the most rewarding periods of his life was the eight years he spent in Geneva, Switzerland working for the World Health Organisation as Coordinator of a special programme on Safety Measures in Microbiology, Division of Communicable Diseases. His activities included the development and publication of the WHO Laboratory Biosafety Manual and the WHO Manual on Safety Measures for Use in Outbreaks of Communicable Disease (such as Ebola). He carried out annual tours of inspection after the eradication of smallpox of the six laboratories in the world permitted to retain the variola virus - Moscow, CDC Atlanta, Port Down UK, China and two others. He continued to be a member of the World Health Organisation Biosafety Advisory Group until his death. He was also a consultant to the World Health Organisation Global Programme on AIDS and the Division of Communicable Diseases. As well as numerous honours, special and professional recognitions Vinse wrote almost 40 publications in the field of environmental health and biosafety.

It was in Switzerland that he met Fiona with whom he had a son, William. He also had two sons, Mark and Stephen, from a previous marriage. Vinse was very proud of his four grandchildren (Lauren, Eileen, Thad and Alessa) and his two great-grandchildren - Ginny and Ted.

Vinse's love of music began when he was just seven when he learnt the trombone and played in many bands at High School and University. But it was vocal music that he loved most having had singing lessons at his father's insistence. He sang as a high tenor in male quartets, mixed voice ensembles, chorus, glee clubs and, of course, church choirs. One of his greatest memories is of singing with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir (very unofficially at one of their choir practices, but he loved it). It was not only through music that he served his church. He was a church elder for 62 of his 88 years at churches in the USA, Switzerland and Crail.

Vinse had an amazingly young outlook - he made no concessions to age nor expected any. He also enjoyed technology and embraced the internet using both his personal computer and iPad and listened to music on his iPod.

Perhaps the best way to sum up Vinse is in a letter Fiona received from a friend a few days after Vinse died:

*"I am incredibly pleased to have had Vinse as a friend and to have worked with him - and for us to have achieved so much - with the Children's Centre. When many would have been pleased to get out their slippers, Vinse was dealing with burst pipes, goldfish, staffing crises and funding applications. He was an absolute joy to know and work alongside; always unruffled, considerate and courteous. So many in Crail knew him and, I am sure, valued his friendship, as I did."*

Vinson Romero Oviatt 1926 - 2014. A very special person and a fine man.

The Stars and Stripes was flown from the flagpole over the weekend at the Town Hall and in Tolbooth Wynd in his memory.



Vinse with his great-grandson Ted in September 2013 at Craigtoun