

Henry Saltonstall Dakin

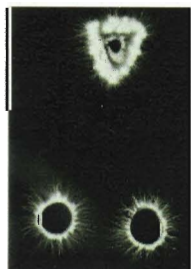
December 6, 1936 to August 25, 2010

By sisters Susanna and Mira, niece Sara, son-in-laws John and Jon, wife Vergilia, and daughters Adriana, Rose, and Julia

With his wife Vergilia and his closest family members present, Henry Dakin died peacefully in his home in Ukiah, California on August 25th at age 73 from complications due to pancreatic cancer. A fourth generation Californian, Henry used his resources and knowledge to empower individuals and businesses ignored by the traditional philanthropic community. Additionally, he worked tirelessly for peace during the Cold War by fostering lines of communication between the citizens of the US and USSR. Henry overcame an early family life marked with great tragedy to raise a successful family and leave an indelible professional mark with his selfless generosity.

Henry spent his early professional career in San Francisco and Berkeley conducting cutting edge technological research. After graduating from Harvard University, he worked at Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in the 1960s, and designed a pocket radiation detector that still protects workers in risky radiation environments.

In the 1970s from his 3101 Washington Street office in San Francisco, Henry researched parapsychology and mind expansion. He was a member of the Physics Consciousness Research Group — purportedly the inspiration for the film *Ghost Busters* — along with Robert Anton Wilson, Fritjof Capra, and Uri Geller among others.



He was closely involved with the Esalen Institute and the Institute of Noetic Sciences. He also authored a book on Kirlian photography, a technique for

photographing the energy fields that surround living things. That book became his longest standing best seller.

At this time Henry began supporting “Samizdat” underground newspapers in the Soviet Union and writings smuggled out of political prisons — by translating and publishing them. He was once mentioned in the Soviet newspaper Pravda as “the most dangerous man in America.”

Deeply concerned about the nuclear arms race in the 1980s, he and Vergilia transformed his new and large 3220 Sacramento Street office building in San Francisco into a hub of citizen diplomacy. For the next two decades, Henry’s offices incubated many non-profit organizations, lending subsidized space or technical support to several now-established NGOs at a time when they were mere fledglings.

These organizations included the United Nations Association of San Francisco, San Francisco Global Trade Council, International Forum on Globalization, Bioneers, Institute for Global Communications, the Presidio Alliance, Esalen Institute’s Russian-American Center (formerly the Soviet-American Exchange Program), Internews, Link TV, the Association of Space Explorers, the Center for Citizen Initiatives, and others.



With Henry’s help these non-profits deployed the latest in telecommunications technology, including 1980s prototypes of electronic mail and early tele-video conferencing links. One organization set up teleconferences between recovering alcoholics on either side of the Iron Curtain. Henry’s work in citizen diplomacy aroused the attention of the *The New York Times* in 1988 (“Fortune in Toys Helps to Put Americans and Russians in Touch”).

The New York Times

Fortune in Toys Helps to Put Americans and Russians in Touch

By MICHAEL FELDMAN, Special to the New York Times
Published November 13, 1988

SEEKING CONTACT In five buildings amid the boutiques in the 3200 block of Sacramento Street are 20 organizations, headed by a former toy manufacturing stuffed animals, whose goal is to assure that information flows between Moscow and San Francisco.

The groups were brought together by Henry S. Dakin, a 51-year-old businessman-philanthropist, to promote Soviet-American exchanges because of his belief that relations between the superpowers were drifting ominously toward confrontation.

52 SIGN IN TO
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Over the same period of time, Henry and Vergilia worked with other Bay Area parents to found the San Francisco Waldorf School, now one of the largest Waldorf Schools in North America. Despite being a devotee to technology, he believed his childrens’ hands, hearts and minds would grow in the strongest way through Rudolf Steiner’s Waldorf curriculum.

Henry spent his childhood in Pasadena, California. He was the third of five children born to Richard Young Dakin and Susanna Bryant Dakin. Mother

Susanna was a California historian, the author of several biographies of men and women of early California. His father was a widely respected engineer whose family had moved to Pasadena from Illinois.



Henry's ancestors first emigrated to California in the 1840's and established themselves as land stewards. In the 1920s, Henry's maternal grandmother received an award from the State of California for a spectacularly successful citrus farm she established on a tract of land in the Santa Ana Canyon, purchased by her father. Thereafter she started developing part of that land into the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, which was later transferred to Claremont Graduate University.



In the 1950's, Henry's father purchased Leonard Lake in Mendocino County to protect its old growth redwoods from logging. Henry, together with his sister Susanna Dakin and nephew Samuel Dakin, later placed the 3800 acres of land around Leonard Lake into a conservation easement, protecting it from development and logging in perpetuity.



Henry's professional achievements were preceded by tragic family events. His father, mother, eldest brother and four nieces and nephews died in a plane

crash in 1966. Henry's father and his eldest brother Roger were the founders of the Dakin toy company. Dakin, Inc. was, at one point, the nation's most admired manufacturer of plush toys. Henry then lost his first wife, Judith Clarke, in an automobile accident, and earlier his beloved younger sister Sara to suicide.



Despite these tragic losses, Henry persevered to live a life of remarkable curiosity, industry, and generosity. Working with his sister Mira Sadgopal on behalf of victims on the Bhopal, India tragedy in 1984, fellow worker Vivek Pinto noted: "I haven't known anyone else who came forward so generously. Henry put himself exactly where his beliefs were. What endeared him all the more was that he never said a word about what he did. Such human beings are rare and in my book are giants. They blaze a trail."

This loving husband, father, brother and friend, and remarkable contributor to human wellbeing, was a 40-year resident of Pacific Heights in San Francisco, more recently of Mill Valley in Marin County, and finally Ukiah. During his two-year residence in Ukiah, Henry was an active member of the Mendocino Environmental Center.

He is survived by his wife Vergilia Paasche Dakin, daughters Adriana Dakin, Rose Dakin, and Julia Dakin Frech, son David Platford, two grandchildren, lola Dakin Gravois and Gwendolyn Dakin Johnson, nephew Samuel Dakin (surviving son of brother Roger), sisters Susanna Dakin and Mira Sadgopal (Mary Dakin), his nephew's and sisters' children, and a vast network of friends and people who have relied on his generosity and imagination for many decades.



A memorial celebration will take place for Henry Dakin at 2 pm on November 14, 2010 in San Francisco at the Golden Gate Club in the Presidio.



Memorial gifts in Henry's name may be made to any of these organizations:

- **San Francisco Waldorf School**
2938 Washington Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
(415) 931-2750
www.sfwaldorf.org
- **Earth Island Institute**
2150 Allston Way, Suite 460
Berkeley, CA 94704
(510) 859-9100
www.earthisland.org
- **Rudolf Steiner Foundation**
PO Box 29915
San Francisco, CA 94129-0915
(510) 859-9100
www.rsfsocialfinance.org
- **Mendocino Environmental Center**
106 West Standley Street
Ukiah, CA 95482
(707) 468-1660
www.mecgrassroots.org

Contact info for Vergilia and family:
345 N Spring Street, Ukiah, CA 95482
(707) 463-2567 vdakin@gmail.com

