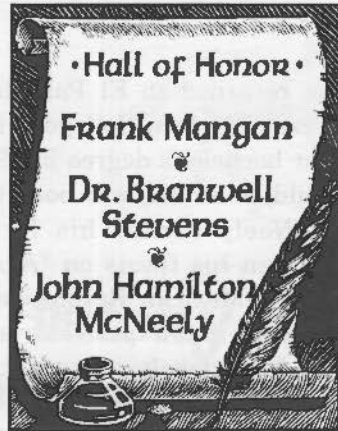




*John Hamilton McNeely,
March 2, 1917–February 12, 2003
2007 Hall of Honor Recipient*

• Hall of Honor •
2007

John
Hamilton
McNeely



John Hamilton McNeely was born on March 2, 1917 in Evansville, Indiana to John H. and Alma Wood McNeely who were owners of a newspaper, the *Evansville Journal*. His father, who had served as a captain during World War I, was a researcher in higher education for the United States Department of the Interior.

John grew up in Washington, D.C. where he attended Central High School and went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Washington University and his master's degree at American University, both in Washington, D.C. He taught in a private school in the Washington area for ten years. In 1940, when Dr. McNeely was in his thirty-third year, his father died, whereupon he and his mother moved to Houston where her family resided.

Completing his teacher certification at Rice University in Houston, Dr. McNeely taught briefly in the Houston schools before accepting a position at McAllen High School where he met his future wife, Dora Lopez. Teaching jobs took him to Laredo and then on to El Paso in 1945 to the faculty of El Paso High School. He had considered a position at Fort Stockton but chose El Paso, although both cities were nearly the same size at that time. When it was noticed by members of the history faculty at the College of Mines that his vita contained the notation that he had contributed articles to the *Texas Handbook*, an authoritative history of Texas, he was offered and he accepted a position as an instructor at College of Mines in 1946. In 1947 he married his former student, Dora Lopez, and brought her to El Paso where their first child, Alma Alicia, was born two years later.

Dr. McNeely took a sabbatical and went to Austin to study for his doctorate at the University of Texas at Austin. In 1951

he returned to El Paso to what had become Texas Western College. His wife Dora earned her bachelor's degree in 1952 and their second child, John Jr., was born in May of 1956. Dr. McNeely earned his PhD in 1958, having written his thesis on "Agrarian Land Reform in the Mexican Revolution." He moved up to become a full professor and member of the graduate faculty.



Dr. McNeely

He was founder of the Institute of Oral History at the University of Texas at El Paso for which were interviewed important El Paso artists among others. He also contributed articles to *Password*. During his career at the University of Texas at El Paso he donated approximately 8000 historical volumes to the University library to be part of what became the John H. McNeely Collection. The Collection was previously housed separately but is now interspersed throughout the holdings. Today scholars doing research use many of the rare volumes. The executive conference room at the University library was named in honor of Dr. McNeely.

His interests and contributions to the university lay also in many other areas. He donated grandfather clocks, furnishings, and sculptures to the library and to the president's residence. Early in his career he enjoyed periods of strong interest in tropical fish and exotic birds and later in life cultivated many varieties of fig trees. Upon retirement in 1984 he was honored as professor emeritus. Dr. McNeely was a lifelong art collector and in retirement he focused on building a remarkable collection of religious art in the rectory and in the sanctuary of Guardian Angel Parish.

He enjoyed a retirement of nearly twenty years and was in good health until he was struck down by a brief final illness. He passed away at the age of eighty-four on February 12, 2003 on the birthday of his youngest grandson, Stephen. His wife of fifty-five years survived him by only three and a half years. They lie in rest together at Valley Memorial Gardens near McAllen, Texas.

