

Velma Elizabeth Roeth Huskey

Born October 8, 1917, Houston, Ohio; died January 2, 1991, Santa Cruz, Calif.; wife and collaborator of Harry Huskey, who worked behind the scenes with her husband, coauthoring several papers with him; paper on “Lady Lovelace and Charles Babbage,” coauthored with her husband, appeared in Vol. 2, No. 4 of the Annals of the History of Computing and is widely regarded as one of the keystone papers recording the life and work of Ada, Lady Lovelace.

Education: BA, English, Ohio State University, 1939.

Professional Experience: information specialist, National Bureau of Standards, 1948-1952.

Honors and Awards: member, Phi Beta Kappa.

In 1938 Velma was attending Ohio University where she was the “best student and beautiful girl who sat in the front row”¹ of Harry Huskey's class in plane geometry. They were married on January 2, 1939, and moved to Columbus, Ohio, where they completed their education at Ohio State University (Velma graduated Phi Beta Kappa).

With the start of World War II, they moved to Philadelphia where Harry taught Navy students and serendipitously became involved in the development of ENIAC. For the rest of her life she was directly or indirectly involved with computers, seeing them change from million dollar to \$200 devices.

After three years in Philadelphia, they spent a year in postwar England coping with the rationing system with their two girls, who were 3 and 5 years old. This was followed by a year in Washington, D.C., after which they moved to their beloved West, landing at the Institute for Numerical Analysis at UCLA in West Los Angeles. There she became a technical writer preparing reports about the computers that were being constructed. Meanwhile, in 1954 Harry became a professor at the University of California at Berkeley.

For some years she helped her husband edit reviews and articles for the *IEEE Transactions on Computers* for the Computer Society. She was a member of the official computer delegation visiting the USSR in 1959, and in 1980 she was a member of the IEEE computer delegation to China. During leaves from the university, Harry and Velma spent time in Amsterdam, Munich, and Cambridge, England. They became interested in applying computers to the solution of problems in developing countries, and assisted in developing computer activities at universities in India, Burma, China, Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria Jordan, and Pakistan.

¹H. Huskey, 1991.

In later years Velma became interested in the life of Ada Byron, Countess of Lovelace, only daughter of poet Lord Byron, and confidant of Charles Babbage. Summer vacations were spent in Oxford reading letters in the Lovelace-Byron collection. As a result she wrote several articles for the *Annals of the History of Computing*.

See also the biography of her husband, Harry Douglas Huskey.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biographical

Huskey, Harry D., "Memoirs," *Ann. Hist. Comp.*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1991, pp. 290-305.

Anon., "Velma E.R. Huskey," Obituary, *Ann. Hist. Comp.*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1991, p.230.

Significant Publications

Huskey, Harry D., and Velma Huskey, "Lady Lovelace and Charles Babbage," *Ann. Hist. Comp.*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1980, pp. 299-329.

UPDATES