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Local News

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Posted on: Tuesday, July 27, 2004

E. Chipman Higgins, alternate energy expert, dead at 79

By [Curtis Lum](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

E. Chipman Higgins, a retired Navy officer who also worked on the development of alternative energy with Hawaiian Electric Co., died Sunday. He was 79.

Higgins was born on March 21, 1925, in New York and enlisted in the Navy, where he rose to the rank of captain. During his 27 years of service, Higgins worked on the Polaris system, the first submarines to be armed with nuclear ballistic missiles during the height of the Cold War.

After retiring from the Navy, Higgins joined Hawaiian Electric as director of energy supply. One of his responsibilities was to develop and implement alternate energy sources.

He was instrumental in bringing geothermal energy and ocean thermal energy conversion technology to the Big Island. He also played a role in bringing wind power to O'ahu.

Longtime friend John Craven met Higgins while both were assigned to the Polaris project. Craven was appointed the chief civilian scientist for the project in 1963.

The two men continued their association after the Polaris project when both became involved in the development of alternate sources of energy.

"He was a wonderful guy, absolutely wonderful," Craven said. "He worked very hard on the development of alternate energy."

Higgins retired from HECO and went on to serve as an energy adviser to Gov. George Ariyoshi and many state legislators.

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Higgins served as president of the Honolulu Navy League and was a director with the national Navy League. He also was a governor of the Mayflower Society.

Higgins is survived by his wife, Barbara; son, Ronald II; daughters, Marjorie Evans and Neal Walters; six grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Private services.

Donations may be made to the American Cancer Society Hawai'i Unit, 2370-B Nu'uuanu Ave., Honolulu, HI 96817; Honolulu Academy of Arts, 900 South Beretania St., Honolulu, HI 96813, or the USS Missouri Memorial Association.

Reach Curtis Lum at 525-8025 or culum@honoluluadvertiser.com.

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