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Leonard P. Pepkowitz, 91, a Chemist in Atomic Energy, Dies

By [JEREMY PEARCE](#)

Leonard P. Pepkowitz, a chemist involved in early nuclear research who advised the Atomic Energy Commission on the materials necessary for safely generating commercial power, died on Oct. 19 in Amherst, N.Y. He was 91.

The cause was congestive heart failure, his family said.

Dr. Pepkowitz began his career as a biochemist studying plant physiology, but shifted subjects to join the Manhattan Project in 1944, which was already on its way toward producing the nation's first atomic weapon.

For the project, he served the next two years as a group leader in analytical chemistry at the [Los Alamos National Laboratory](#) in New Mexico.

Following the war, he continued his work in radiochemistry for General Electric in Schenectady, N.Y., and helped refine the G.E. Betatron, an early particle accelerator used to produce X-rays for nuclear research. From 1947 to 1953, Dr. Pepkowitz was head of the general analytical section at G.E.'s Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory in Niskayuna, N.Y., where he worked on developing materials to cool nuclear reactors.

He held other research positions in the nuclear materials industry before joining the faculty of Erie Community College in Buffalo in 1971. At Erie, Dr. Pepkowitz taught chemistry and science, and was named a professor in 1975. He retired in 1987.

At points throughout his career, he was a member of the Atomic Energy Commission's committee for materials and methods of measurements.

Leonard Paul Pepkowitz was born in Paterson, N.J., in 1915. He received his undergraduate degree from the [University of Minnesota](#) and a doctorate in biochemistry from Rutgers in 1943.

Dr. Pepkowitz is survived by his wife, the former Selma Weiss. The couple lived in Youngstown, N.Y. Dr. Pepkowitz's first wife, Deborah Rabinowitz, died in 1968.

He is also survived by a son, Dr. Samuel Pepkowitz, a pediatric pathologist, of Los Angeles; a daughter, Rebecca Gilstrop of Baltimore; three stepdaughters, Leslie Anavim of Hartford, Conn., Dr. Belle Mann, a psychologist, of Portland, Ore., and Elise Sheppard of Houston; a brother, Milton Pepper of Boynton Beach, Fla.; a sister, Mildred Miller of Manhattan; eight grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

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