Benjamin Harrison Burma II, always called Ben by his friends, was born 3 July 1917 in Bristow, Iowa, to Benjamin Harrison Burma and Mildred Alice Montgomery. Ben's father had come to the United States from East Friesland, an origin of which Ben was proud, in the 1860s and settled on the East Coast. Eventually he moved to Bristow, Iowa, where he owned a hardware store. After the death of Ben's father the family moved to Sioux City, Iowa, where Ben received his early education.

After graduation from East High School in Sioux City, Iowa, Ben attended the Iowa State University at Ames, from 1934 to 1939, receiving a B.S. degree in chemical technology. He enrolled in the University of Wisconsin in 1939 and received a Ph.M. degree in geology.

As was the case with so many young men at this time, Ben's career was temporarily interrupted by World War II, and he enlisted in the U.S. Infantry on 5 June 1941. He became a pilot in the U.S. Army Air Corps on 3 July 1942 and was honorably discharged on 10 January 1946. Ben flew a B-17 Flying Fortress on missions over Germany, one of which was the bombing of Peenemunde, the experimental rocket base, another being the harbor that was the home port of battleship _Tirpitz_, and still another, the bombing of Hamburg where half the planes were lost in thirty minutes. Ben got a certain amount of perverse delight in pointing out that for all this trouble he was rewarded with the honor of being the oldest and most transferred second lieutenant in the Eighth Air Force.

After being honorably discharged he returned to the University of Wisconsin and received a Ph.D. degree in geology in 1947. He had the rank of instructor from 1946 to 1947.

He then began a teaching career at the University of Nebraska where he was made assistant professor in September 1947 and associate professor in 1949. He was also made curator of invertebrate paleontology in the University of Nebraska State Museum in 1950.

Professor Emeritus and Mrs. T. Mylan Stout of the geology department recall that they acted as matchmakers for Ben and Jo, Ben's wife. The first time Ben and Jo met at the Stouts' home, in one of Ben's impulsive but correct nongeological judgements, he told Jo he was going to marry her, a prediction that subsequently came true.

It was while at the university that his most significant theoretical paleontological contributions were published. He was a pioneer in the study of quantitative invertebrate paleontology in the days when the involved and tiresome mathematical calculations were performed by hand rather than on a pocket or desk-top calculator. Also, true to his intellectual predilection, he was interested in semantics and published "The Species Concept: A Semantic Review" and "Reality, Existence and Classifications: A Discussion of the Species Problem." I know Ben still received occasional requests for reprints...
some 25 years after the papers appeared. Mention should also be made of his teaching at Lincoln where Prof. Stout recalls him as “an excellent and conscientious teacher.”

Ben resigned his associate professorship in August 1955 and joined the California Exploration Company in San Francisco as supervisor of the Paleontologic and Stratigraphic Laboratory. The company had in its employ at that time many geologists who had been in Ben’s graduate classes. As supervisor he organized the Microscopy Laboratory, which was involved in typical problems common to the petroleum industry. I remember working with Ben during the summer and fall of 1956 on a thin-section sedimentary petrographic study of the sedimentation of the Paleozoic of Bolivia. He solved the problem of the origin of the “low grade metamorphism of the clastics” by ascribing it to hydrothermal metamorphism by geothermally heated connate waters, apparently the source of virtually all the so-called sedimentary quartzites and micaceous shales. This was the kind of problem Ben liked, one that gave him a wide scope for innovative ideas.

Most of his time during the six years in San Francisco was spent on studies of Latin America, where the company was heavily involved at the time. His work mostly focused on macropaleontology and micropaleontology, carbonate and clastic petrography, and stratigraphy of such diverse areas as southern Patagonia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Trinidad, and British Guiana. In 1961 he visited Guatemala City for three months and assisted me with a review of the stratigraphic micropaleontology of Guatemala which had been developed as the result of an extensive exploration and drilling program during the previous four years.

After his return to San Francisco he found that Standard of California had decided to virtually withdraw from exploration in Latin America, and this decision occasioned the closing of the Paleontologic and Stratigraphic Laboratory. Ben was then transferred to the California Standard Company in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, as a staff geologist. There, from 1961 to 1963, he organized the use of thin-section microscopy for stratigraphic, correlation, and facies studies of the Mississippian of western Canada. This was an exciting time in the petroleum development of that area, and he made a significant contribution to the company’s exploration activities.

In 1963 he left Chevron Standard and the petroleum industry. He returned to the San Francisco Bay area and became a teacher in the Campbell Union High School District where he taught physics and biology from 1964 to 1980 when he retired. As usual he threw himself into his new career with enthusiasm and was rewarded by the regard and respect of his students and fellow teachers. Although he had left geology as a profession, he continued his memberships in the Geological Society of America (Fellow), American Association of Petroleum Geologists, Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists, the Paleontological Research Institution, the Paleontological Society, the Paleontological Association, the Geochemical Society, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (Fellow).

Ben had a very human side. His interests were wide-ranging and his knowledge extensive. He was a James Joyce devotee and he taught extracurricular classes on the author. I remember riding the Southern Pacific from Palo Alto with Ben; his hands were full with Ulysses or Finnegans Wake and the even thicker commentaries, and he would constantly be turning pages from text to notes. He had a 45-year collection of science fiction which he donated to San Jose State University for the use of graduate students and faculty. He was Member No. 298 of Limited Editions and had several thousand volumes of the classics at home which did not remain unread. Ben was a stamp collector, too. He specialized in nudes and seminudes, which was very Ben-like and displayed a sort of wry humor, probably designed to attract quiet attention. Ben was a man of firm
opinions and not hesitant about expressing them, a trait that sometimes could be admirable or irritating, depending on the listener.

Ben died at the age of 63 on 21 January 1981 from a massive heart attack in the doctor's office where he was undergoing a medical examination. Immediate help failed to save him.

He left behind his wife, Jo (Florence) Johansen Burma; three children, Benjamin H. Burma III (Jamie), Sara Dian, and David Wilson; and a sister, Edith Burma Munsell of Wilmington, North Carolina.

I knew Ben intermittently for 25 years, especially after his departure from industry. Our families would get together on Christmas Day, and Ben would always come up with a geological gift—an identified Mississippian brachiopod tie pin, a tectite from Australia, a porcelain bud vase with an ammonite (identified by him) in relief. He never lost his interest in geology.

I'm sorry he's gone; I miss him; so do his friends and, even more, his family. We have all suffered the loss of an interesting, intelligent, and complete man.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF B. H. BURMA II

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