Memorial to Austin A. Sartin
1936–1993

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Austin Albert Sartin, the William C. Woolf Professor of Geology and department chairman at Centenary College, died on November 21, 1993, in Shreveport, Louisiana, at the age of 57. Austin Sartin was a true gentleman, a scholar, and an inspiration to students, colleagues, and friends; his optimism was infectious, and his hope for the future was unfailing.

Austin was born in Texarkana, Texas, on April 21, 1936, and moved to Shreveport at the age of five. He was educated in the public schools of Shreveport and received his B.S. degree in geology, with honors, from Centenary College in 1959. While he was a student at Centenary, Charles A. Hickcox was an influential mentor to Austin by serving as a professor and friend. Professor Hickcox's influence went beyond the bachelor's degree, as he asked Austin to teach geology in the evening at Centenary while employed as a geologist at Texas Eastern Corporation. Austin found this teaching experience so rewarding that he decided to pursue a career in college teaching. In June 1961, he married his college sweetheart, Peggy Elliott, and together they decided he would need a Ph.D. to fulfill this dream. Austin obtained an M.S. degree in geology in 1966 from the University of Arkansas and a Ph.D. from Southern Methodist University, as a National Science Foundation Fellow, in 1972. While at SMU Austin worked with Bob Laury, Jim Brooks, Mike Holdaway, Tom Williams, and Bill Krumbein. It was largely the interactions with Bob Laury and trips to modern carbonate environments that piqued Austin's interest in carbonate systems.

Austin accepted a position as assistant professor of geology at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, in 1970, and he began to form the lasting professional and personal friendships with students and colleagues that made him a unique teacher, mentor, and friend. His wonderful rapport with students was demonstrated in both the development and advising of student geological organizations. Under his direction, the department became involved in Southwestern Association of Student Geological Societies (SASGS) field trips. He guided the initiation of the Gamma Phi chapter of Sigma Gamma Epsilon (SGE) in 1974; and, under his supervision in 1980, SFA was one of ten schools in the country to establish a student chapter of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG).

Austin became director of the geology graduate program and achieved the rank of associate professor in 1977. He was promoted in 1983 to the rank of professor of geology. While at SFA he directed 32 geology theses, four of which won the Outstanding Thesis Award from Sigma Xi, the scientific research society. Many of these theses focused on his research interests, primarily lithofacies and biofacies analysis of carbonate and terrigenous clastic depositional systems. Both his and his students' research resulted in approximately 40 abstracts and articles.
In 1985 Austin accepted an endowed chair at Centenary College and was installed as the William C. Woolf Professor of Geology and department chairman. He strengthened the undergraduate program, initiated a master's degree program in geology, and expanded the number of Ph.D. faculty from two to four, thus improving the expertise and quality of the geology programs. He directed eight geology theses at Centenary, and under his leadership, the department initiated an earth science certification program for public school teachers. Austin rejuvenated SGE and student field trip participation.

Austin Sartin was recognized in numerous ways for his service to and teaching of the geological sciences. In 1978 he was elected national vice-president for the SGE Southeastern Province and, from 1986 to 1990, he served as national president. In 1991 he was named an honorary member of SGE, one of 17 people to be so honored in the society's 75-year history. A biennial student research symposium was established in 1989 through SGE to be held in conjunction with the annual Geological Society of America convention. The winners are presented the Austin A. Sartin Research Award. Austin was elected a Fellow of the Texas Academy of Science in 1984 and served as vice-chairman and chairman of the Earth Science Section. The Geological Society of America honored Austin by naming him a Fellow in 1991. In 1993, he served as co-editor of the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies Transactions, and the annual GCAGS meeting in 1994 included a special commendation award in his memory.

Austin believed his most significant contribution was in the area of teaching. The success of his students in both industry and academia is evidence of his commitment to the profession. These views were shared by others, because Austin received numerous outstanding teaching awards. The students and faculty of Centenary College recognized him as the Outstanding Professor of 1991-1992. The General Board of Higher Education and the Ministry of the United Methodist Church honored Austin with the 1992 Outstanding Teaching Award. In that same year he was recognized as Louisiana Professor of the Year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

Among professional organizations to which he devoted his time and effort during the last 24 years were: the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies, the American Institute of Professional Geologists, the Geological Society of America, Sigma Gamma Epsilon, the Society for Sedimentary Geology (SEPM), the Texas Academy of Science, the Louisiana Academy of Science, Alpha Chi, the National Association of Geology Teachers, Sigma Xi, and the Shreveport Geological Society.

Austin Sartin will be remembered as an outstanding teacher and true friend who had a passion for teaching and who encouraged students to pursue a study of the earth sciences. His untimely death will not lessen his impact on those who crossed his path.

Austin is survived by his wife of 32 years, Peggy Elliott Sartin, and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Memorial gifts in his memory may be made to the Austin A. Sartin Research Award through Sigma Gamma Epsilon.
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