

# Memorial to John Becker Lucke 1908–1982

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On October 2, 1982, after a long illness, John Becker Lucke, lecturer, author, professor, and geologist, died in Harwich Port, Massachusetts, at the age of 74 years. He was born in New York City on February 26, 1908. John Lucke prepared for college at Horace Mann, the well-known preparatory school in New York City. He received his B.S. degree (*maxima cum laude* in geology) from Princeton University in 1929, and his Ph.D. degree, also from Princeton University, in 1933. He also studied at Columbia University under Douglas Johnson, the eminent geomorphologist.

John Lucke was proud of his father, Prof. Charles E. Lucke, who was a noted member of the faculty of Columbia University. After Prof. Lucke retired from Columbia, President Franklin D. Roosevelt thanked him for his services to the nation and arranged for him to teach marine engineering to the navy cadets at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

On July 13, 1977, after the death of his first wife, John married Dorothea Houghton Cudmore. Theirs was a short but singularly happy marriage. They found each other in the pew John always occupied in the Pilgrim Church in Harwich Port, Massachusetts. They were world travelers, having visited together many great cities, magnificent scenery, geologic wonders, and remote places on planet Earth.

Dr. Lucke is survived by his widow; two daughters, Patricia Lucke Morris of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, and Helen E. Lucke of Torino, Italy; and two stepsons, Robert N. Cudmore of Ashland, Massachusetts, and Russell D. Cudmore of Marietta, Georgia.

It was at Princeton that Johnny had some of the most rewarding and spiritual experiences of his life, where he made many lifelong friends, and where the gifted and devoted professors in the geology department stirred and inspired him. It seemed that for Johnny the most important days of the year were not those of the Christmas holiday season but those of the Princeton Alumni Week, which he never failed to attend. His love of Princeton and his gratitude for what he received there remained with him all his life.

I first knew Johnny in the years from 1931 to 1951. We met in a most friendly way at geological meetings, lectures, field trips, and on many an outcrop. I shall always remember him surrounded by his students and enthusiastically debating with them the geologic significance of the outcrop.

He did field work in Montana, Alaska, West Virginia, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and other eastern states, and he was an authority on shoreline geomorphology.

Dr. Lucke was a superb teacher, a forceful, dynamic, and interesting speaker, and as might be expected, he was in constant demand as a lecturer. His students will long remember with pleasure his expertly delivered lectures, often illustrated with beautiful Kodachrome slides. After he retired, he spoke for numerous Cape Cod organizations and was one of the favorite speakers of the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History.

All of us remember how carefully he enunciated every word. Words, their precise meaning, derivation, and pronunciation, meant more to him than to most of us.

Dr. Lucke was also an effective and successful administrator, and his staff enjoyed working with him. One of his colleagues once told me years ago that Dr. Lucke gave all his staff complete freedom to organize and teach their courses as they saw fit. This freedom was much appreciated, especially because in the academic world it was not always granted in those days.

In a memorandum on the retirement of John B. Lucke from the University of Connecticut, which was included in the minutes of the faculty of the University, Professors Janet M. Airken, J. Homero Arjona, and Weston A. Bousfield wrote:

Soon after arriving at the University of Connecticut, he established himself as an outspoken member of the faculty, repeatedly speaking up (always elegantly, often vehemently) for what he thought right. His election to the University Senate for over two decades is his colleagues' tribute to this quality and to the incisiveness of his thought. Recognition of his scientific stature on campus came with the presidency of our chapter of Sigma Xi in 1947-48. His success as an administrator stemmed very largely from his complete confidence in his staff and his unswerving loyalty to them. Students will remember best his wonderfully phrased and beautifully organized lectures, and his insistence on quality in thought and act. That he commands the affection and respect of his majors is without question. That these feelings extended beyond departmental realms is evident in his election to honorary membership in Theta Xi fraternity.

In a letter written to Mrs. Lucke after Johnny's death, President Arend D. Lubbers of Grand Valley State Colleges wrote:

No one enjoyed life more than John. . . . I always liked his gregarious nature. He not only was an able professor, he was a good friend as well. He played an important role in Grand Valley's early years, both as a model for young professors and a person who brought people together socially so they could learn to share and communicate with one another. I wanted you to know of our appreciation of his life and work here at Grand Valley State. He will be an important figure in the annals of our institution.

Johnny had a wonderful sense of humor. One of his neighbors called it a golden sense of humor, and he was the cause of wit and humor in others. I can still hear his hearty laugh.

He was a loyal member of the Congregational Church in Storrs, Connecticut, and of the Pilgrim Church in Harwich Port, Massachusetts; both churches were important facets of his life.

He loved scenery and traveled all over the world to enjoy, photograph, and study it.

His passing brought sorrow not only to his family but also to his students and to his friends in nearby and distant places.

Geologists attending meetings of the Geological Society of America, State Geologists Association, Friends of the Pleistocene, and other geological societies will miss him, as will his many friends at Princeton University, the University of Connecticut, Grand Valley State Colleges, and Cape Cod.

The world will not be the same without Johnny. It will be smaller and less interesting. But we have not lost him, for we will remember his dedication to teaching

and geology, his skill as a lecturer, his sense of humor, his friendliness, his enjoyment of people, his love of life, and his capacity for intense loyalty.

*Death this year has taken friends  
Whose kind we shall not see again . . . .  
Memory keeps with loving care  
Deeds they did and tales they told.  
But living friends are hard to spare.*

Dr. Lucke was geologist for Torrey, Fralich & Simmons, Ltd., of Bradford, Pennsylvania, 1929; geologist for Sloan & Zook Company, Bradford, Pennsylvania, 1930; professor of geology at John Marshall College, Jersey City, New Jersey, 1933-34; geologist for the Texas Company at Pampa, Texas, 1934-35; assistant soil surveyor for the Soil Conservation Service, U.S.D.A. in New Jersey and Georgia, 1935-36; assistant professor of geology at West Virginia University, 1936-40; assistant geologist on the West Virginia Geological Survey, 1936-38; professor of geology, chairman, and founder of the Department of Geology and Geography at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, 1940-68; geologist on the National Geographical Society-Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution's Mid-Atlantic Ridge Expedition, 1948; geologist on National Park Service Katmai Expedition, Alaska, 1953; secretary (sole officer), New England Intercollegiate Geologic Conferences, 1951-60; state geologist of Connecticut, 1954-60; and professor, chairman, and founder of the Department of Geology of Grand Valley State Colleges, Allendale, Michigan, 1964-73.

During World War II, Dr. Lucke was on active duty in the United States Naval Reserve, ending as photo interpretation officer in charge of terrain and beach studies of the Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Areas, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and was awarded the Navy Commendation Ribbon by Fleet Admiral C. W. Nimitz.

The Geological Prize Scholarship of the University of Connecticut is named for Dr. Lucke, and the geological reading room of Grand Valley State Colleges is also named for him.

Dr. Lucke's scientific and professional memberships included Fellow of the Geological Society of America, Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, member of the American Geophysical Union, member of the Arctic Institute of North America, member of the International Oceanographic Foundation, member of the National Association of Geology Teachers (vice-president, 1953), member of the American Society of Photogrammetry, member of the Littoral Society, and member of Sigma Xi (president, Connecticut chapter, 1947-48).

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