

# Memorial to James D. Hume

## 1923–1995

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*Cochiti Lake, New Mexico*

James David Hume was born in Fresno, California, December 17, 1923, but was raised in Michigan. He graduated from the United States Military Academy (B.S., 1945) and later enrolled in the University of Michigan for a second degree, in civil engineering (B.S.E., 1949). There he found geology and stayed on for two advanced degrees (M.S., 1950; Ph.D., 1957). His thesis on trace elements in the sedimentary carbonates of Michigan was a pioneering study.

As a teaching fellow at Michigan he found his natural métier and also his wife and active partner, Patricia Wright. They were married June 19, 1954. He taught at Purdue University for two years (1955–1957).

Jim and Pat came to Tufts University in 1957. He found a two-man department with a strong commitment to undergraduate teaching and an established tradition of field observation, i.e., an environment to which he was sympathetic. Jim loved the earth and the art and science of geology. Through the years, he tried to help students to share that love—not blindly, but on the basis of well-informed familiarity. Insistence on the evidence was characteristic of all of his teaching. His teaching style was low-key, but it shone through clearly that he *cared*—for his subject, for the world he lived in, and above all, for his students and their need to learn; it was eminently successful.

He had great respect for the classical foundations of geology and was securely grounded in them. But he was also well aware of “modern” activity in the science and had an uncanny sense for the possibly important, as distinguished from the trivial. He consistently introduced his students to important new ideas early.

Soon after the seminal paradigm of plate tectonics emerged from the oceans in the 1960s, Jim introduced it in the introductory course not, as has become fashionable, as a dogmatic preamble, but as capstone to an appreciative examination both of the evidence on which it is based and of the variety of phenomena to which it provides a unifying theorem.

He particularly loved sedimentary rocks and the clues they held to past environments. They enriched his concern for environments of the present—not for preservation of static environments, but for learning to live harmoniously and in “dynamic equilibrium” with them.

Not long after he came to Tufts, Jim accepted an invitation to join Marshall Schalk in a long-term study of beach processes at Point Barrow, Alaska. His methodical analyses of process, products, and form along that Arctic coast through ten years stand almost alone in the literature of the western world. They serve as a baseline for interpretative investigations of both modern Arctic shorelines and their analogues in the more widespread Arctic environments of the Pleistocene.

As a member of the Londonderry, New Hampshire, Planning Board, he ensured that land-use zoning was consistent with ground-water protection. He initiated studies of Pleasant Lake, Deerfield, New Hampshire, which have strengthened local efforts to manage development and



minimize pollution. In later years he worked with Pat on the reconstruction of past environments of archaeological sites in New Hampshire that she was investigating.

Jim will be remembered by friends, colleagues, and students as one who made their worlds better places to live in—but especially by those students who have gone on further in geology and found themselves to be indeed well prepared.

He is survived by his wife, Patricia, of Londonderry New Hampshire; his son John A. Hume, of Midway, Kentucky; daughter Margaret A. Hume of Brookline, Massachusetts; sister Margaret Anne Johnston of Fruitport, Michigan; and several nieces and nephews.

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