

Morris Leighton (1926-2014)



URBANA – Morris "Brud" W. Leighton, Chief Emeritus of the Illinois Geological Survey, passed away on Friday (April 11, 2014), surrounded by his loving family in his home. A service of remembrance will be at 10:30 a.m. at Renner-Wikoff Chapel, 1900 S. Philo Road, Urbana. Brud was born in Urbana on June 17, 1926, the son of Morris and Ada Leighton. He graduated from Urbana High School in 1944 and continued with his education at the University of Illinois, earning a Bachelor of Science in chemistry in 1947, and then at the University of Chicago, he earned his Master of Science in geology in 1948, followed by his doctoral degree in geology in 1951.

He began his career with Standard Oil of New Jersey/Esso in Tulsa, Okla., leading into a distinguished 32-year career as a geologist and manager which took him around the world with his high-school sweetheart and loving wife (Jean Bosley Leighton) and family in tow.

Upon retirement from Esso, Brud began a second career serving the Illinois State Geological Survey as its chief for 11 years. Brud earned many awards and accolades over the span of his two careers. He has authored more than 75 published works. His forte in exploration for oil and gas, his deep understanding of the geologic phenomena of his surroundings, along with his thirst to experience the cultures around the world made him a most interesting person. His love of Urbana, the Fighting Illini and the University of Illinois never abated with his generous, enthusiastic support. He also remained active with Urbana Rotary, the Illinois State Geological Survey, University of Illinois Department of Geology, Association of American State Geologists, Geological Society of America and American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

When he no longer participated in the sports he loved (tennis, golf, skiing), he continued to be an avid spectator, enjoying football and basketball most. A loving father and grandpa, he will be sorely missed, for he was a leader with the best sense of humor. A pun awaited at every opportunity. He filled the rest of his leisure time with extensive travels and found great satisfaction in maintaining his garden with a variety of flowers, especially roses.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Jean Bosley Leighton; and brother, Freeman Beach Leighton. He is survived by his brother, Richard; his three daughters, Randi, Kathy and Kari; two son-in-laws, Jim and Mike; and four grandchildren, Mike, Steve, Kami and Rachel.