

John G. Broughton (1914 - 2002)

John Gerard Broughton, 87, of Albany, NY, died on April 19, 2002 as a result of complications from a brain injury received in a fall on February 19, 2002. Dr. Broughton was born on October 16, 1914 in Rome, NY, the son of the late Judson Lee and Grace Johnson Broughton. He was raised in Pavilion, NY and was a graduate of the University of Rochester, with a B.A. (1936) and M.S. (1938) degrees in geology. In 1940 he was granted a Ph.D. degree in geology at the Johns Hopkins University.

During the years 1940-43 Dr. Broughton worked summers with the U.S. Geological Survey with which he had begun work on a part-time basis in 1935-36. Field studies with the U.S.G.S. entailed research on structural and economic geology problems in New Jersey, Idaho, California, and Arizona. His early professional experiences included an instructorship in geology at Syracuse University in 1940-42.

Dr. Broughton served as Assistant State Geologist of New York in 1942-44. From 1944 to 1949 he was Acting State Geologist and Senior Scientist in the New York State Geological Survey. John was instrumental in the development and passing of an amendment to the State Education Law that established a State Science Service in 1945. This new agency consolidated the operations of the State Geologist, State Paleontologist, State Botanist, State Entomologist, and State Archaeologist. The consolidation of the natural-history research programs of these formerly independent offices gave the New York State Science Service, as a single agency, the strength to take on a prominent role in advisory services to other State agencies, the mineral industry, educational institutions, and the public. These services included issues of health and safety, environmental protection, and preservation of natural-history specimens and archaeological remains. The Science Service became the home of the Biological, Geological and Anthropological Surveys of New York State.

Dr. Broughton was appointed Principal Scientist and State Geologist in 1949. As State Geologist, Dr. Broughton established beneficial cooperation between the N.Y. State Geological Survey and the U.S. Geological Survey, especially with respect to both field studies and amateur prospectors in the Adirondack Highlands, in the Hudson Highlands, and in several other geologic provinces in New York State. An extensive survey of the limestone resources of the State prospered under his supervision and resulted in the establishment of a major cement plant and several significant quarry operations. He also initiated and directed a comprehensive project to delineate and map the State's surficial glacial deposits, some of which provided abundant raw material for the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway. John was personally involved in the preliminary geologic studies at the West Valley Nuclear Service Center in Cattaraugus County, NY, which concluded that this location was one of the safest for burial of low-level radioactive waste in the State—a conclusion that has been proved correct by many later geologic studies.

An accomplishment that gave Dr. Broughton exceptional professional satisfaction was the publication in 1961 of the State Survey's first comprehensive geologic map of New York State, published in folio format at a scale of 1:250,000. This work, which was accomplished under his direction, became a model for the production of state geological survey maps in other states by using innovative colors and patterns that provide stratigraphic and petrologic characterization to the depicted geologic units. The map also formed the basis of a subsequent updated version in 1970. John was awarded the John Mason Clarke Medal from the State Geological Survey in 1995 for this great accomplishment. Since its inception in 1986, the John Mason Clarke Medal has been awarded to only six scientists, four of whom were cited for the creation of that map.

In 1968, Dr. Broughton was appointed Director of the New York State Museum and Assistant Commissioner of Education for the New York State Museum and Science Service, of which the Geological Survey is a part. In 1970, he was appointed Acting Associate Commissioner for Cultural Education within the N.Y. State Education Department. A year later, he was confirmed in this position as Associate Commissioner. In that role, he supervised the planning and construction of the new Cultural Education Center, and he gave leadership to the vastly enlarged and reorganized New York State Museum, which now annually attracts great numbers of scholars, tourists, and school children to view its many exhibits and archival resources.

In 1978, Dr. Broughton retired from the State Education Department and his position of Associate Commissioner. This move provided the time he wanted to earn the stripes of master gardener through the Cornell University Cooperative Extension Service. He traveled widely in the United States and abroad. His trips to Great Britain and to Japan gave him an opportunity to visit and to study foreign gardens of note.

Dr. Broughton was an Honorary Member of the Association of American State Geologists. He was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America, an Honorary Fellow of the Rochester Museum of Arts and Science, Member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Sigma Xi. He was also an advisor to many universities and colleges for the purpose of curriculum development and the hiring of science personnel.

Dr. Broughton was married to the late Katherine Braman Oster and is survived by his companion, Nancy Russell McCain of Syracuse, NY; two daughters, Karen Alampi and husband, Domenico of Cos Cob, CT, and Susan Domanico, and husband, Louis, of Altamont, NY; and four grandchildren, a grandson-in-law, and one great grandchild.

John was a visionary who was equal to the task of implementing Governor Rockefeller's dream of building a government complex in Albany that would stun the world and give the State of New York the leadership role of taking our society in the 21st Century. He enhanced that dream with his concepts of how science could best serve society. These ideas included (1) the establishment of the Science Service, (2) the development and production of a modern State map of bedrock geology, (3) the establishment of the Office of Cultural Education within the State Education Department, and (4) the design and construction of a home for that Office, the Cultural Education Center, and a new Natural History Museum.

John was imbued with a strong sense of loyalty-to his family, to his friends and colleagues, to the universities which helped him to develop his considerable intellectual capacities, and to the New York State Geological Survey and the State Museum. John was a gentle man and a gentleman. He honored people and events through sartorial elegance, and brightened numerous occasions with his quick wit, kindly humor, and joyous laughter. We are left with memories of a good man who lived his life with gusto, guided by principles of decency and by respect and love for his fellow man. He gave us good reason to commemorate his life, and we do so, perhaps, with a better perspective on where each of us has been and where we are going.

May John rest in peace in the knowledge that he is still very much alive in the institutions that he built.